

The Monastery of Aghios Menas in Thessaloniki

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In the business center of Thessaloniki, surrounded by two-storey shops and office buildings, stands an impressive post-Byzantine basilica dedicated to Aghios Menas (Fig. 1). In this church, two early Christian capitals, an ambo, and a few fragments of sculptured decoration are incorporated. The lower part of its apse dates also from the same period. Its district, located near the port of Constantine, was of great importance for the city during both the Byzantine and Turkish domination periods. Although the origin and history of the church of Aghios Menas and its district have long attracted scholarly attention, many of its mysteries still remain unresolved.

There are several important unanswered questions regarding the monument: When was the original church on the site built, and what was its architectural type? How many times was it destroyed and rebuilt? Was it a parish church or a monastic katholikon, and for how long? To which saint was it dedicated initially, if not to St. Menas? And, finally, where was the original church of Aghios Menas (if there was another) situated in Thessaloniki? This study intends to shed light on some periods of the monument's history by furnishing new historical evidence and re-investigating the above questions.

THE PRESENT MONUMENT

The existing monument was built in 1851–52. Its construction date has been a source of confusion to researchers, starting with Nikolaj Kondakov. He published information to the effect that the church built in the nineteenth century had been destroyed at the beginning of the twentieth.¹ Oreste Tafrali believed that the church was renovated be-

Many thanks are due to the Thessaloniki Metropolis, and especially to reverend senior presbyter Demetrios Vakaros for allowing and facilitating my research. I would also like to thank Professor Georgios Velenis for discussing the problems of the apse of Aghios Menas, Associate Professor Demetrios Maniotes for advice on Ottoman legislation, Assistant Professor Alexandra Karademou-Yerolympos for providing part of Antoine Wernieski's map, Vasiles Koniordos, architect in the 9th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities in Thessaloniki, for providing archival material and discussing the condition of the present monument, and, finally, Dr. Evangelos Hekimoglou for long and fruitful conversations and helpful criticism.

¹N. P. Kondakov, *Makedonija: Archeologičeskoe putešestvie* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 122. Kondakov states that he visited the monument in 1900. He read in the newspapers about a disaster striking Aghios Menas when he returned to his own country, "two years ago," as he adds in a footnote. His book was published in 1909, so we can conclude that by the expression "two years ago" he probably means in 1907.

tween 1833 and 1840, burnt down by the fire of 1890,² and rebuilt on a new plan, an opinion also shared by other scholars.³ That Kondakov and Tafrali were mistaken⁴ is revealed by the following facts:

1. A marble inscription over the church's west door states that it was completely rebuilt in 1852.⁵ Another marble inscription on the west facade bears the date 1851.⁶

2. Aghios Menas is located outside the area that was devastated by the fire of 1890. The ruined area was rebuilt according to a new town plan that differed radically from the previous medieval urban fabric. So, by comparing the maps of Thessaloniki before⁷ and after⁸ the fire, we can pinpoint the area with some precision.⁹

3. Aghios Menas is not included in the list of the burnt down buildings that was published by a Greek newspaper¹⁰ of the time. On the contrary, frequent references in the press to services taking place in the church confirm that it was fully operational in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹

4. There is no reference to the destruction of a church of Aghios Menas in the documents kept in the Thessaloniki Metropolis Archive (TMA)¹² or the Macedonia Historical

²O. Tafrali, *Topographie de Thessalonique* (Paris, 1913), 176.

³G. Millet, *L'école grecque dans l'architecture byzantine* (Paris, 1916), 131; I. K. Vasdravellis, "Ο βομβαρδισμός της ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Ἁγίου Μηνᾶ παρὰ τῶν Ἑνετῶν," in Γέρας Ἀ. Κεραμοπούλλου (Athens, 1953), 421; R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris, 1975), 397.

⁴Recently other scholars have taken this view. See V. Demetriades, *Τοπογραφία τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης κατὰ τὴν ἐποχὴ τῆς τουρκοκρατίας, 1430–1912* (Thessaloniki, 1983), 252; and M. Kambouri-Vamvoukou, "Ἀρχιτεκτονικὰ γλυπτὰ ἀπὸ τὸν Ἅγιο Μηνᾶ Θεσσαλονίκης," *Proceedings of the 10th International Congress on Early Christian Archaeology* (Thessaloniki, 1984), 225. I was the first to offer arguments in support of this view: see Τό κτιριακὸ συγκρότημα τῆς Μητροπόλεως Θεσσαλονίκης (Thessaloniki, 1985), 82–83 n. 156.

⁵The inscription reads ἸΠΡΟ ΕΤΩΝ ΤΡΙΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΔΕΚΑ Ο ΠΕΡΙΚΑΛΛΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΙΟΣ / ²ΤΟΥ ΜΗΝΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΘΛΟΦΟΡΟΥ ΝΑΟΣ ΟΥΤΟΣ ΑΙΦΝΗΔΙΩΣ / ³ΤΟΥ ΠΥΡΟΣ ΒΟΡΑ ΚΑΤΕΣΤΗ ΑΝΗΓΕΡΘΗ ΔΕ ΕΚ ΒΑΘΡΟΥ / ⁴ΘΕΟΥ ΔΟΝΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΝΑΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΛΕΙΝΟΥ ΜΑΣ ΠΟΙΜΕΝΑΡΧΟΥ / ⁵ΖΗΛΩ ΚΑΙ ΣΠΟΥΔΗ ΣΥΝΤΟΝΩ ΤΟΥ ΚΑΤΕΧΟΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΘΡΟΝΟΝ / ⁶ΕΥΚΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΑΞΙΩΣ ΗΔΗ ΤΕ ΠΟΛΥΝ ΤΟΝ ΧΡΟΝΟΝ / ⁷ΤΗΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ ΤΟΝΔΕ ΤΟΥ ΣΕΙΠΤΟΥ ΙΕΡΩΝΥΜΟΥ / ⁸ΜΕΤΑ ΕΥΣΕΒΩΝ ΠΡΟΥΧΟΝΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΛΑΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΕΠΩΝΥΜΟΥ / ⁹ΑΛΛ Ω ΑΘΛΗΤΑ ΕΛΕΟΥΣ ΔΟΣ ΙΚΕΤΑΙΣ ΣΟΥ ΣΗΝ ΧΑΡΙΝ / ¹⁰ΤΩ ΝΑΩ ΠΡΟΣΕΡΧΟΜΕΝΟΙΣ ΔΙ ΕΥΛΑΒΕΙΑΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΝ / ¹¹ΕΝ ΕΤΗ 1852 ΦΕΥΡΟΥΑΡΙΟΥ Α'.

⁶The inscription reads Μ(Η)ΝΑ Ν(ΑΟΣ) V(ΙΚΤΩΡΟΣ) V(ΙΚΕΝΤΙΟΥ) / ²1851 ΦΕΒΡ(ΟΥ)ΑΡ(ΙΟ)Υ 26.

⁷The map of Thessaloniki, drawn for the Ottoman army headquarters in 1882–83, was first published by S. Eyice, "Atatürk' ün doğuduğu yıllarda Selânik," in *Dogumunun 100. Yilinda Atatürk'e Armağan* (Istanbul, 1981), 461–518, and was re-published by A. Samouilidou and A. Stefanidou-Fotiadou, "Η Θεσσαλονίκη κατὰ τὴν τουρκοκρατία–Τὰ τουρκικά μνημεῖα," *Archaeologia* 7 (May 1983), 54.

⁸The map was published by Demetriades, *Τοπογραφία*.

⁹For the re-planning of the devastated area, see A. Karademou-Yerolympos, "Επανασχεδιασμός και ανοικοδόμηση τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης μετὰ τὴν πυρκαϊὰ τοῦ 1917. Ἐνα ορόσημο στὴν ἱστορία τῆς πόλης καὶ τὴν ἀνάπτυξη τῆς ἐλληνικῆς πολεοδομίας," *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἑπετηρὶς τῆς Πολυτεχνικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης*, suppl. 31 (1985), 41–47.

¹⁰Φάρος τῆς Μακεδονίας, August 25, 1890, no. 1454.

¹¹The newspapers Φάρος τῆς Μακεδονίας (1881–97), Ἀλήθεια (1903–8), and Νέα Ἀλήθεια (1908–11) have been thoroughly searched. Two archaeologists who visited the church at the beginning of the twentieth century also confirm that it was operating. Kondakov, *Makedonija*, 122–25; and G. Lambakes, "Περιηγήσεις I," *Δελτ.Χριστ. Ἀρχ.* Ἐτ. 4 (1904), 7–9.

¹²The Thessaloniki Metropolis Archive contains a wealth of information concerning Macedonia during the last two and a half centuries. For information about it, see Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, *Τό κτιριακὸ συγκρότημα*, 111; also A. A. Aggelopoulos, "Τὸ ἱστορικὸν ἀρχεῖον τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Θεσσαλονίκης," *Makedonika* 15 (1975), 361–65.

Archive (MHA),¹³ though they contain a wealth of information about the disastrous fire and the subsequent rebuilding,¹⁴ as well as about Thessaloniki in the pre-liberation period. At that time Aghios Menas was one of the city's major Greek churches,¹⁵ and its loss would not have gone unremarked.

5. The church's architectural type bespeaks a date of construction around the middle, not the end, of the nineteenth century.¹⁶

Kondakov and Tafrali were perhaps confused by the fact that the 1890 fire left Thessaloniki's cathedral in ruins. From 1590 and until its destruction in 1890, the church of Aghios Demetrios,¹⁷ near the sea walls on the site of the present Aghios Gregorios Palamas,¹⁸ served as the city's cathedral. During the erection of Aghios Gregorios (1891–1914), Aghios Menas took over some of its functions.¹⁹ This possibly led to the mistaken belief that the latter was in fact the cathedral. Alternatively, Kondakov and Tafrali may have been confused by a small-scale restoration that they considered rebuilding from the foundations. Although no known written source testifies to such a restoration, some features of the monument do indicate that it was restored at some time. Restoration work in 1979 revealed vestiges of a fire under the plaster on part of the ground-floor south wall, up to the window sill.²⁰ Cracks existed around the fan lights of the pediment and the gynaekonitis windows of the west facade even before the earthquakes of 1978.²¹ The thick stone cornice of the ground-floor windows, which differs from the cornice of the gynaekonitis windows, suggests that the building has been reinforced. No other features indicative of a major building phase have been detected. Even if such a restoration has indeed taken place, the church's architectural type has not been affected.

The erroneous date—after 1890—of the latest reconstruction of Aghios Menas led

¹³The Macedonia Historical Archive is based in Thessaloniki. I have thoroughly searched both archives concerning this matter.

¹⁴The rebuilding included the present Thessaloniki cathedral, the Greek consulate, the metropolitan's residence, the Greek hospital and the Greek gymnasium. The history and architectural analysis of these buildings are scrupulously investigated in Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, *Τό κτιριακό συγκρότημα*.

¹⁵M. Hatzi-Ioannou, *Ἀστυγραφία Θεσσαλονίκης, ἥτοι τοπογραφικὴ περιγραφή τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης* (Thessaloniki, 1880), 99. M. Demitsas, *Ἡ Μακεδονία ἐν λίθοις φθεγγομένοις καὶ μνημείοις σωζομένοις*, 2nd ed., I (Thessaloniki, 1988), 415.

¹⁶For a detailed analysis of the architectural type of the present Aghios Menas, see T. Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, "Ὁρθοσκευτικὴ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη κατὰ τὴν τελευταία φάση τῆς τουρκοκρατίας, 1839–1912. Ἐκκλησίες-Συναγωγές-Τζαμιά," *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Πολυτεχνικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 11, suppl. 31 (1989), 87–143.

¹⁷For a description of this church, see T. Mantopoulou, "Ὁ παραθαλάσσιος ναὸς τοῦ Ἀγίου Δημητρίου στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη," *Makedonika* 20 (1980), 175–91.

¹⁸Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, *Τό κτιριακό συγκρότημα*, 43–90.

¹⁹Although Aghios Nikolaos Tranos served as the cathedral at that time, several official ceremonies took place in Aghios Menas, such as the service for the liberation of Thessaloniki from the Turks. T. Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, "Νεότερα στοιχεῖα γιὰ τὸ ναὸ τοῦ ἁγίου Νικολάου Τρανοῦ (1863)–Προσέγγιση σ' ἓνα θέμα μεταβυζαντινῆς τυπολογίας," *Makedonika* 29 (1995), 170–71.

²⁰This information, as well as archival material, was provided by architect Vasiles Koniordos, who supervised the restoration work in 1979. For a further detailed description of these features, see Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, "Ὁρθοσκευτικὴ ἀρχιτεκτονική," 142–43.

²¹This is attested by photographs taken in 1976 and kept in the archive of the Institute of the History of Architecture, School of Technology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Tafrali,²² and subsequently Gabriel Millet,²³ to maintain that “the monument burnt by the 1890 fire” had preserved the plan of the original church on the site, which had been a T-shaped basilica of Hellenistic origin. They based their opinion on a sketch of the plan of Aghios Menas displayed on a map of Thessaloniki drawn by the engineer Antoine Wernieski²⁴ around 1880 (Fig. 3). But as we have demonstrated, Wernieski’s sketch was, in fact, of the present monument, which, built in 1851–52, was never destroyed. This sketch, though slightly oversized for the scale of the map,²⁵ shares many similarities with the existing monument’s plan (Fig. 4). The description by Kondakov,²⁶ in 1900, also corresponds to this. Andreas Xyngopoulos,²⁷ Ioannis Vasdravellis,²⁸ and Raymond Janin²⁹ consider also that the original church on the site had been a basilica. Since no excavations have taken place in or around Aghios Menas, we have no definite information about the architectural type of the original church.

Aghios Menas is a three-aisled post-Byzantine basilica, surrounded on three sides by an arcaded portico over which the gynaekonitis is placed (Fig. 4). This architectural type, which shows influence of early Christian and Byzantine architecture, swept through Greece and Asia Minor in the nineteenth century.³⁰ The patriarchal church of Aghios Georgios in Constantinople (built in 1720 and restored in 1836) is one of the most outstanding examples.³¹ The present monument consists of two principal building phases: The main body of the church—the nave and the portico—was built in 1851–52. The central sanctuary apse (Fig. 2) is anterior to the rest.

According to a manuscript of 1885, published by Vasdravellis, the present monument

²²Tafrali, *Topographie*, 176.

²³Millet, *L'école grecque*, 131.

²⁴Wernieski’s map, long sought after by scientists, has recently been located by Alexandra Karademou-Yerolympos and published by her in “Πρώιμες πολεοδομικές πρωτοβουλίες της δημοτικής αρχής και το πρώτο Σχέδιο Πόλεως στη Θεσσαλονίκη (1870–1880),” *Thessaloniki* 4 (1994), 159–68. The map is included in the catalogue of the maps of Thessaloniki published by J.-M. Spieser, *Thessalonique et ses monuments du IV^e au V^e siècle* (Paris, 1984), 216, who maintains that it was made in 1891. Karademou-Yerolympos dates it to around 1880. The precise and detailed depiction of the part of the eastern city wall, which was nearest to the sea and demolished in 1873, leads to the conclusion that the map cannot be dated much later. See P. N. Papa-georgiou, “Περὶ χειρογράφου Εὐαγγελίου Θεσσαλονίκης,” *BZ* 6 (1897), 538.

²⁵The dimensions of the present monument are 34.75 × 22.50 m (not including the main sanctuary apse). The dimensions that result by measuring on the map are approximately 43 × 28 m.

²⁶Kondakov, *Makedonija*, 122–25.

²⁷A. Xyngopoulos, “Καταφυγή–Ἀχειροποίητος,” *Makedonika* 4 (1955–60), 441–42, even calculated the length of this basilica and expressed the opinion that it was more than 50 m.

²⁸Vasdravellis, “Βομβαρδισμός,” 422.

²⁹Janin, *Centres*, 397.

³⁰The influence of early Christian architecture on post-Byzantine architecture has been observed and stated often: A. C. Orlandos, “Ein spätbyzantinischer Hallenkirchen-Typus Nordgriechenlands,” *JÖB* 21 (1972), 209–22. Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, “Θρησκευτική αρχιτεκτονική,” 421–26; eadem, “Νεότερα στοιχεία,” M. Kambouri-Vamvoukou, “Ο ναός του Αγίου Μηνά στη Θεσσαλονίκη. Νέος τύπος εκκλησιαστικής αρχιτεκτονικής,” in *Ἐκκλησίες στὴν Ἑλλάδα μετὰ τὴν Ἀλωση*, ed. Ch. Bouras (Athens, 1989), 21–23, asserts that the church of Aghios Menas introduced a new architectural type. In my view, this architectural type evolved in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Aghios Menas represents one of its most splendid and refined examples.

³¹See Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, “Νεότερα στοιχεία,” and A. Pasadaios, *Ὁ Πατριαρχικὸς Οἶκος τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Θρόνου* (Thessaloniki, 1976), 131–34.

was designed and built under the supervision of an architect named Rallis Ploufos.³² The cost of the rebuilding was borne mainly by Thessaloniki's Greek guilds and the whole Orthodox community, on the understanding that the income from both the church and the surrounding workshops would be used to finance the Greek educational establishments in Thessaloniki, which were chronically short of funds.³³ From this point onward the church and precinct of Aghios Menas are listed as property of the Thessaloniki educational establishments or the Greek Orthodox community of Thessaloniki in the codices, cadastres, and documents of the community, which are kept in the Thessaloniki Metropolis Archive and the Macedonia Historical Archive.

In the TMA codex General Cadastre of the Greek Orthodox Community of Thessaloniki,³⁴ which was prepared in 1918 by Menelaos Kompothekras,³⁵ the church is described as follows:

8. Holy Church of Aghios Menas

Stands at No. 6, Vasileos Herakleiou Street. Area, together with its precinct, approximately 2,345 square Turkish ells. Built in 1818, on the site of a burnt down monastery of monks, called by the Turks *Yanik Manastir*, at the expense of the parishioners; burnt down around 1839 and rebuilt on the initiative of His Grace the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Ieronymos, at the expense of the pious notables and the people in the year 1852 . . .³⁶

The date and the details of the reconstruction of the present church coincide with the information provided in the inscription over the west door.

The General Cadastre also mentions the sacred sites attached to Aghios Menas:

Sacred sites of Aghios Menas

i. *Aghiasma* [holy-water spring] of Aghia Anna

Lies covered by slabs under a shop of the [Greek] community on Vasileos Herakleiou Street, on the right-hand side of the entrance to Aghios Menas as one goes in . . .³⁷

³²The manuscript was written by Fr. Piatzes (?) and was based on the account of Aghios Menas' priest Anthimos: Vasdravellis, "Βομβαρδισμός," 425.

³³K. Tattis, "Ιστορικά σημειώσεις περί Θεσσαλονίκης," *Gregorios Palamas* 2 (1918), 522–23. This information accords with the inscription over the door, which states that the construction was financed by both the notables and the members of the Greek community.

³⁴I located the codex Γενικὸν Κτηματολόγιον τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Κοινότητος Θεσσαλονίκης, and am working on its publication. For a brief description and presentation of the cadastre and its importance, see T. Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, "On the Identification of the Church of Nea (Megali) Panaghia in Thessaloniki," *JÖB* 46 (1996), 421–22. Also T. Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou and E. Hekimoglou, "Τα κτηματολόγια της ελληνικής κοινότητας της Θεσσαλονίκης ως πηγές Ιστορίας και Τοπογραφίας της πόλης. Το παράδειγμα των σχολείων," *Proceedings of the 15th Greek Historical Congress* (Thessaloniki, 1995), 383–84.

³⁵Menelaos Kompothekras was a prominent member of the Greek Orthodox community of Thessaloniki. See, A. Souliotes-Nikolaides, Ἡ "Ὁργάνωσις Θεσσαλονίκης," 1906–1908, 3rd ed. (Thessaloniki, 1993), 34–37.

³⁶TMA codex Γενικὸν Κτηματολόγιον τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Κοινότητος Θεσσαλονίκης, 42: Η'. Ἱερὸς Ναὸς Ἀγίου Μηνᾶ. Κεῖται ἐν ὁδῷ Βασιλέως Ἡρακλείου ὑπ' Ἀριθ. 6. Ἐμβαδὸν μετὰ τῆς περιοχῆς [τετραγωνικῶν] πηχεων περίπου 2345. Ἐκτίσθη τὸ 1818 ἐπὶ χώρου πυρποληθέντος Μοναστηρίου Καλογήρων, ὀνομαζομένου τουρ-κιστὶ Γιανικ Μαναστήρ, δαπάνη τῶν Ἐνοριτῶν, ἐκάη περὶ τὸ 1839, καὶ ἀνεκτίσθη τῇ πρωτοβουλίᾳ τοῦ μακαρ. Μητροπολίτου Θεσ/νίκης Ἱερωνύμου, δαπάνη τῶν εὐσεβῶν Προυχόντων καὶ τοῦ λαοῦ ἐν ἔτει 1852 . . .

³⁷*Ibid.*, 42: Ἱερὰ Τοπιὰ Ἀγίου Μηνᾶ α' Τὸ ἀγίασμα τῆς Ἀγίας Ἄννης. Ὑφίσταται κεκαλυμμένον διὰ πλακῶν ὑπὸ Μαγαζεῖον τῆς Κοινότητος κείμενον ἐν ὁδῷ Βασιλέως Ἡρακλείου παραπλεύρως τῆς εἰσόδου Ἀγίου Μηνᾶ & δεξιᾷ τῷ εἰσιόντι.

No church or holy-water spring dedicated to Aghia Anna in Thessaloniki is mentioned in any other known written sources. A document of 1569 mentions a church of Aghia Marina, located near Aghios Menas and belonging to the Great Laura on Mount Athos.³⁸ It is impossible to say with any certainty whether Aghia Marina has anything to do with the holy-water spring in question; but, according to the General Cadastre, the holy-water spring of Aghia Marina was situated under a house near the cathedral of Aghios Gregorios Palamas, of which it was a dependency.³⁹

The 1918 cadastre also lists the property of Aghios Menas, which included the following:

1. One house. In the precinct of the church. One storey with three basements [basement rooms?].
2. One house. In the precinct of the church. One storey, with two rooms and a basement [room].
3. One shanty . . . (in the precinct of the church) . . .
 . . . Note ii. The 16 community shops described on page 1 and located on the site labeled *Glassware Shops* were built on land obtained from the *once large precinct of Aghios Menas*. Many of the shops in the “arcade of Aghios Menas” (page 2) were built on land in the precinct of the same church. The 16 shops on the *Glassware Shops* site, as also those in the Arcade of Aghios Menas, belong to the community . . .⁴⁰

Further details about these later commercial buildings are furnished by the same cadastre. The property of the Greek Orthodox community in this area consisted of the following:

1. Sixteen shops on Vasileos Herakleiou Street (on the site of the glassware shops). They were made previously of timber and used by the shoemakers’ guilds. These guilds owned a private room behind Aghios Menas’ sanctuary apse, where they conferred. [The shops] stand on the north side of the church of Aghios Menas. . . . In 1895 and 1896 . . . 12 new shops were constructed [on the site] from the main entrance to the east side . . . In 1901/2 the other shops were built at the west end of the east side. . . .
 A total of 16 shops were built on land obtained *from the precinct of the church of Aghios Menas* . . .
2. The premises of the Bank of Athens and later the Ionian Bank
 Vasileos Herakleiou Street. Erected afterwards at the expense of the community on the 16 shops on the same Vasileos Herakleiou Street mentioned on page 1, no. 1. Consists of a chamber, three rooms, and a basement. . . .
3. Shops of the Aghios Menas Arcade. Situated on Ioannou Tsimiski Street and bordering to the east with the Jewish community’s khan, to the west with the former Sossidis khan, to the south with Ioannou Tsimiski Street, and to the north with the forecourt of the church of Aghios Menas and the former Bank of Athens. The shops were built mainly *on land belonging to the church of Aghios Menas*; partially on land previously owned by the metochion of Mount Sinai [monastery of St. Catherine] which was bought by the community some thirty years ago; and partially on a small piece of land owned by the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher, against a lump payment of two thousand piasters annually as compensation to the Holy Sepulcher, the right to ask for more being ruled out. The

³⁸I. K. Vasdravellis, “Δύο ανέκδοτα τουρκικά έγγραφα προερχόμενα ἐκ τῶν μονῶν τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους Λαύρας καὶ Βατοπεδίου,” *Makedonika* 12 (1972), 289: ἔχομεν . . . πλησίον εἰς τοῦ Ἁγίου Μηνᾶ ὀκτὼ δωμάτια μετ’ Ἐκκλησίαν τῆς Ἀγίας Μαρίνης . . .

³⁹Γενικὸν Κτηματολόγιον τῆς Ἑλλ(ηνικῆς) Ὁρθοδόξου Κοινότητος Θεσσαλονίκης, 22.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 42–43, emphasis added.

construction of the buildings, whose present value is approximately 500,000 drachmas (including the land) began in 1905. . . . They consist of:

I. 47 shops, privately numbered, of one storey. . . . Total area approximately 2,740 square Turkish ells.

II. The premises of the Bank of the Orient. . . .

III. The premises of the Anglo-Hellenic Company, comprising two identical apartments. . . .⁴¹

The large number of buildings⁴² constructed on the “once large precinct of Aghios Menas” reveals its extent and consequently furnishes an indication that Aghios Menas had been a monastic *katholikon*. The above-mentioned map by Wernieski shows the block (of approximately 6,500 m²) on which Aghios Menas was situated (Fig. 3). The church occupied the northeast corner and, according to the figures given in the 1918 cadastre, Aghios Menas’ precinct was the biggest part of it (approximately 3,300 m²). Today the block is cut in two by Ionos Dragoumi Street. The 1918 cadastre notes that all these buildings were erected at the expense of the Greek Orthodox community.

The same information about the land belonging to Aghios Menas is found in another codex, Cadastre of the Greek Orthodox Community of Thessaloniki, which was written for the years 1894 to 1906⁴³ and is kept in the MHA, as well as in a report on the economic management of the community’s property included in an even older codex of the TMA, Second Volume of the Acts of the Local Greek Orthodox Community Delegation Containing (296) Two Hundred Ninety-Six Pages and Commencing on January 26, 1891.⁴⁴

The biggest part of the block, together with the church of Aghios Menas, escaped the great fire that devastated Thessaloniki in 1917.⁴⁵ But as the Greek Orthodox community of Thessaloniki dissolved into the Greek state after the city’s liberation, and a new town plan was being contemplated, an acrimonious dispute arose over the ownership of this property.⁴⁶ The contenders were the state, the community, and probably several Athonite monasteries. The object at issue was 3,300 m² of land, whose value had rocketed during the nineteenth century, and the aforementioned commercial buildings in the heart of Thessaloniki’s business center.⁴⁷ Documents were produced from the Athonite monaster-

⁴¹ Ibid., 1–4, emphasis added.

⁴² Part of the Aghios Menas Gallery still survives. K. Trakosopoulou-Tzimou, “Στοά Αγίου Μηνά–Τράπεζα Ανατολής” in *Νεώτερα μνημεία της Θεσσαλονίκης* (Thessaloniki, 1985–86), 24–25; and E. Hekimoglou, “Τὸ κτίριο τοῦ ὑποκαταστήματος τῆς Τράπεζας τῆς Ἀνατολῆς στὴν ὁδὸ Ἀγίου Μηνᾶ στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη,” *Thessaloniki* 3 (1992), 211–26.

⁴³ MHA codex *Κτηματολόγιον τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Κοινότητος Θεσσαλονίκης*, pp. 14 and 16 (nos. 18, 19, and 20). The codex is presented in Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou and Hekimoglou, “Τὰ κτηματολόγια,” 382–83.

⁴⁴ TMA codex *Βιβλίον δεύτερον τῶν πρακτικῶν τῆς Ἀντιπροσωπείας τῆς ἐνταῦθα Ἑλληνικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Κοινότητος περιέχον σελίδας (296) διακοσίας ἐνενήκοντα ἕξ καὶ ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ 26 Ἰανουαρίου 1891*, pp. 3–25. For a presentation of the report, see Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou and Hekimoglou, “Τὰ κτηματολόγια,” 381–82.

⁴⁵ The block was saved by the efforts of the Greek army. Νέα Ἀλήθεια, September 18, 1917.

⁴⁶ Some details about this dispute may be gleaned from a report of March 1920, “Περὶ ὑποβολῆς ἐκθέσεως ἐπὶ τῆς ἐξελέγξεως τῆς διαχειρίσεως τῆς Ἑλληνορθοδόξου Κοινότητος Θεσσαλονίκης,” signed by Stavros Kordatos. The report was located by Hekimoglou in the MHA and published by Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou and Hekimoglou, “Τὰ κτηματολόγια,” 384–85.

⁴⁷ Finally, according to the law 2508/1920 and its 1926 revision, the church of Aghios Menas and its landed property were declared property of the state’s organization for school buildings and only in 1952 did the

ies' archives, seeking to prove that they had property rights over the area. Four obviously similar documents have been found so far. I located three in the TMA.⁴⁸ They are handwritten copies of originals in the archive of the Pantokrator monastery,⁴⁹ whose seal they bear at the top of the first page. Typewritten copies also exist for official use. Two are Greek translations, dated 1919, of older Turkish originals, and the third is a copy of a Greek original. The fourth is the aforementioned document of 1569 from the Great Laura.⁵⁰ The translations were made and signed by Ioannis Panagiotidis,⁵¹ an experienced translator and Turkish-language scholar. So, thanks to this dispute, many aspects of the life of the church of Aghios Menas have been elucidated.

THE CHURCH OF 1806

The first of these three TMA documents that I will examine concerns the existing monument's immediate predecessor on the site. As the above-mentioned inscription of 1852 over the church's west door informs us, it was burnt down in 1839, on August 29.⁵² The same information is found in the account of O. Didron,⁵³ who visited Thessaloniki in October 1839 on his way to Mount Athos. It is to him that we owe the only known description of this church, which was a large, long three-aisled church with three apses.

The importance of this church for the Greek inhabitants of Thessaloniki is described by a Turkish mullah (judge) named Hairoullach ibn Sinasi Mehmet Aga.⁵⁴ According to his itinerary, written in 1821, Aghios Menas was the largest Greek church, in whose cells [sic] the prominent members of the Greek community gathered to talk about the patriarchate (and, obviously, the Greek War of Independence). In 1818 the church was rich enough to lend 2,500 grosia⁵⁵ to the churchwarden of the church of Panaghouda to rebuild it.⁵⁶ Colonel William Leake,⁵⁷ who visited Thessaloniki in September 1806, mentions the church of Aghios Menas with reference to the splendid early Christian ambo that was then lying in its yard.

church regain its independence. The whole affair caused terrible disagreements, as documents of the TMA attest.

⁴⁸TMA file "Τουρκικὰ ἔγγραφα."

⁴⁹These documents are not included in the volume by V. Kravari, *Actes du Pantocrator*, Archives de l'Athos 17 (Paris, 1991).

⁵⁰See above, note 38.

⁵¹Panagiotidis translated most of the Turkish documents of the Pantokrator archive. Kravari, *Actes du Pantocrator*, 57 n. 14. He translated also the 1569 document of Laura. See above, note 38.

⁵²Tattis, "Ιστορικαὶ σημειώσεις," 522; and Hatzi-Ioannou, 'Αστυγραφία, 99.

⁵³O. Didron, "Le Mont Athos," *AnnArch* 4 (1848), 70: "Saint-Mynas, une grande église grecque longue, à trois nefs, trois absides . . ."; see also Vasdravellis, "Βομβαρδισμός," 425.

⁵⁴A. Papazoglou, "Ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη κατὰ τὸν Μάιο τοῦ 1821," *Makedonika* 1 (1940), 423: "Ἐχουν ἓνα-δυὸ σχολεῖα καὶ μερικὲς ἐκκλησίαις, ποὺ ἡ πιδὲ μεγάλη τους εἶναι αὐτὴ ποὺ ὀνομάζουν Μηνᾶ ἐφέντη, καὶ ποὺ μέσα στὰ κελλιά της μαζεύονται ὅλοι οἱ πρόκριτοι. . ."

⁵⁵*Grosia* is the Greek word for the Turkish *kuruş*. One lira (Ottoman pound) was equal to one hundred *kuruş*.

⁵⁶G. Stogioglou, "Ὁ ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ ναὸς τῆς Παναγοῦδας ἐξ ἀνεκδότων πηγῶν," *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 19 (1974), 390.

⁵⁷W. M. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (London, 1835; Amsterdam, 1967), 243: "One of these βήματα, as they are still called by the Greeks, is in the mosque of Eski Mitrópolis: the other is lying in the yard of a church of St. Minas, which is still appropriated to the Greek worship. . ."

According to a note⁵⁸ written in a copy of Armenopoulos' *Hexabiblos*, published in Venice in 1793, the church of Aghios Menas was dedicated on June 30, 1806. The date concurs with a note in the aforementioned manuscript of 1885.⁵⁹ The 1918 cadastre errs in this respect. The church was built at the expense of Ioannis Gouta Kaftantzoglou,⁶⁰ the most prominent and wealthiest member of Thessaloniki's Greek Orthodox community at that time.

Kaftantzoglou signed the first TMA document immediately after Metropolitan Meletios as the ephor of the church. It was also signed by the monk Arsenios, the delegate of the Pantokrator monastery, and other prominent members⁶¹ of the Greek Orthodox community of Thessaloniki. In the document, an ecclesiastical letter dated September 1, 1806, it is stated that:

because of the reconstruction with the help of God of this most holy church of the Sainted and Glorious Martyrs Menas, Victor, and Vikentios, it has been necessary to mark the borders of the lodging house and metochion opposite in order to avoid conflict and dissension; the borders of the metochion of Pantokrator monastery, which stands opposite the church [of Aghios Menas] to the northwest are recorded here. The metochion is located at a distance of six and a half Turkish ells [= 4.875 m ⁶²] to the west of the church and six ells [= 4.50 m] to the north, measured from the corner of the church, such that the original foundations of the church lie under the edge of the same metochion. Because it was so detected and determined by the administrators and the churchwardens of the church, the metochion shall be preserved intact and undisturbed as it was originally, located at the specified distance from the church. The land in between shall be administered by the church, a seizure of any part of it by the church being forbidden; the gutters shall be preserved as they were initially, and the water shall flow toward the aforementioned church land beside the old foundations. It is also agreed that, in the event of any renovation of the same metochion, its height shall be maintained as it was initially without its being raised at all, nor shall any building project in the direction of the church nor toward the south, neither the upper nor the lower floor, and that in order that the church shall not be endangered by fire—which God may forbid—[the metochion] shall pay the churchwardens three grosia annually as *icare*. . . .⁶³

⁵⁸A. E. Vakalopoulos, 'Η Θεσσαλονίκη στὰ 1430, 1821 καὶ 1912–1918 (Thessaloniki, 1947), 33; and Tattis, "Ἱστορικὰ σημειώσεις," 523. The note reads '1806: ἰουνίου: 30: Ἐγκαινιάσθη ὁ Ναὸς τοῦ Ἀγίου μεγαλομάρτυρος Μηνᾶ καὶ ἦτον Κτήτωρ ὁ μέγας ἄρχων Κυρίου / Ὁ Κύριος Ἰωάννου Καυταντζόγλου ὀνομαζομένου καὶ μάκογλος ἐκ / τῆς ὑπαρχίας τῆς μεγάλῃ Πόλεως Θεσσαλονίκης. / Ἰωάννης. Ἀναγνώστου Δημητρίου: / ἔκ χωρίου μεγάλη Βραναιὰ γράψω."

⁵⁹Vasdravellis, "Βομβαρδισμός," 425.

⁶⁰Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. suppl. gr. 735, fol. 62r: καὶ ἐν δὲ τῇ Θεσσαλονίκῃ ὁ ναὸς τῆς Λαγωδιανοῦ δι' αὐτοῦ [τοῦ Καυταντζόγλου] ἀνηγέρθη, καθὰ καὶ ὁ τοῦ Ἀγίου Μηνᾶ εὐρύδομος. The codex, which is unpublished, contains notes of Menoides Mynas. Kaftantzoglou had also supported the erection of the church of Aghios Athanasios (1818). G. Stogioglou, 'Η ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ πατριαρχικὴ μονὴ τῶν Βλατάδων (Thessaloniki, 1971), 271–75; E. Hekimoglou, "Χριστιανικὲς συντεχνίαι τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης στὰ τέλη τοῦ 18ου αἰῶνα," in *Proceedings of the Symposium Χριστιανικὴ Θεσσαλονίκη Ὁθωμανικὴ περίοδος, 1430–1912, Α'* (1993), 120–22.

⁶¹Ibid., 127.

⁶²Two kinds of Turkish ell were in use. The first, equal to 0.64 m, was used in everyday life, the second, equal to 0.75 m, was used for architectural purposes. Since in the documents the term *architectural* is clearly stated, the second is accepted here. See D. Nikolaides, *Οθωμανικοὶ κώδικες* (Constantinople, 1869), 809.

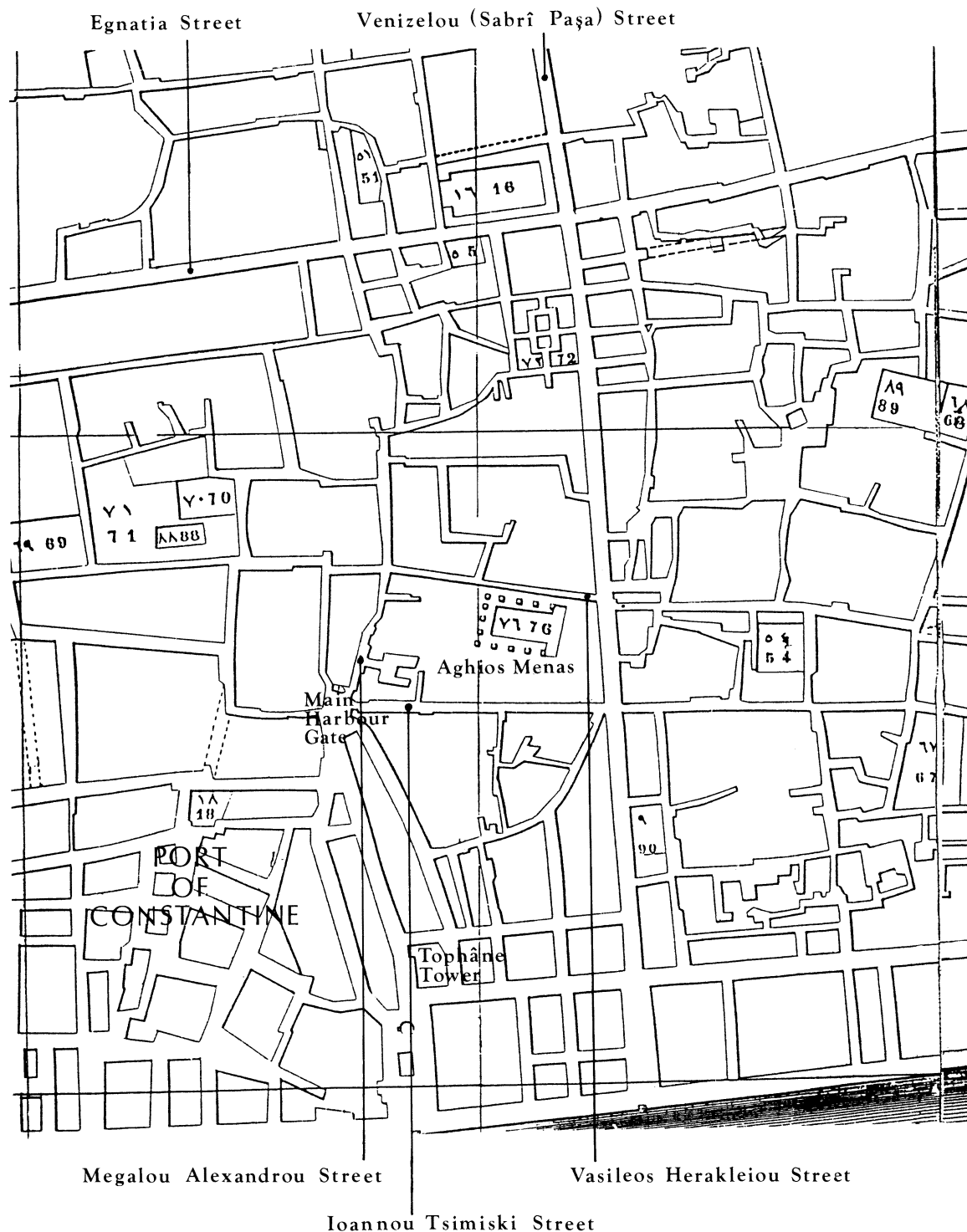
⁶³TMA document, file "Τουρκικὰ ἔγγραφα": ἐπειδὴ ἀνεγερθέντος θεῖα συνάρσει τοῦ πανσέπτου ναοῦ τῶν Ἀγ. κ[αί] Ἐνδ. Μαρτ. Μηνᾶ Βίκτορος κ[αί] Βικεντίου, ἀναγκαῖον ἐγένετο διορισθῆναι τὰ ὅρια τῶν ἀντικρυς αὐτοῦ κοινακίου κ[αί] μετοχίου πρὸς ἀπαλλαγὴν οἰασοῦν διαφορὰς κ[αί] ἀσυμφωνίας, καταγράφονται σήμερον ἐνταῦθα καὶ τὰ τοῦ Μετοχίου τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Μον. τοῦ Παντοκράτορος, κείμενα ἀντικρυς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας πρὸς τὸ μέρος δυτικοβόρριον. Τὸ αὐτὸ Μετόχιον ἀπέχει ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας κατὰ μὲν τὸ δυτικὸν πῆχεων ἑξ κ[αί] ἡμίσεως τεκτονικῶν



1 Church of Aghios Menas, view from the west

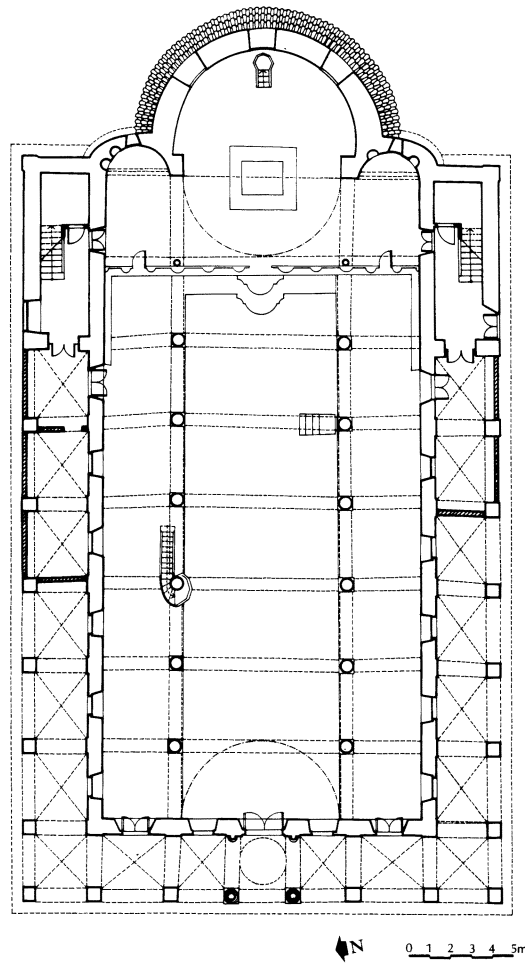


2 Church of Aghios Menas, the apse

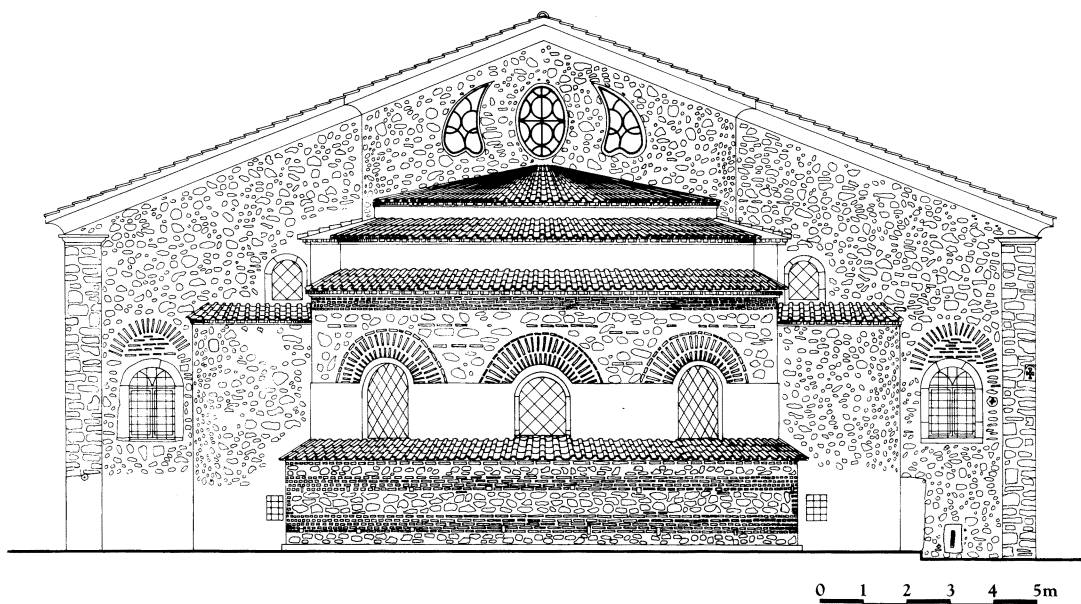


3 Part of the map of Thessaloniki drawn around 1880 by Antoine Wernieski (courtesy A. Karademou-Yerolympos). The street names were added as given in the map published by V. Demetriades, *Τοπογραφία τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης κατὰ τὴν ἐποχὴ τῆς τουρκοκρατίας, 1430–1912* (Thessaloniki, 1983). The monuments' numbers belong to the original map; the buildings to which they correspond are according to a catalogue by Wernieski.

5 Town hall	67 Alliance Israélite Universelle	76 Church of Aghios Menas
16 Hamza Bey Cami'i	68 Talmud Tora	88 Catholic church
18 Lonca Cami'i	69 Ottoman Bank	89 Talmud Tora synagogue
51 Tahtü'l-Kale Hamami	70 French consulate	90 Kalmayor synagogue
54 Yahudi Hamami	72 Bedesten	



4 Church of Aghios Menas, ground-floor plan (design by T. Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou [1995] based on V. Koniordos' original design [1979])



5 Church of Aghios Menas, east elevation (design by T. Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou [1995] based on V. Koniordos' original design [1979])

This document corroborates the date of the church's reconstruction. The land occupied by the metochion of Pantokrator monastery partially coincides with the site of the aforementioned sixteen shops of the Greek community that were renovated in 1895–96.

As the letter reveals, the foundations of an even earlier church on the site lay at least 5 m to the west and 4.5 m to the north of the church of 1806, under the border of the Pantokrator metochion. As the lower part of the apse of the present church is considered to belong to the original monument, it should have been incorporated also into the church of 1806. The inevitable conclusion is that the original monument was both wider and longer than the church of 1806, which Didron describes as “long.” The foundations mentioned in the document must have been those on the west side, which explains the flow of the water from north to south, parallel to them.

The final detail in the document is of great importance because it refers to a law relating to *vakif*⁶⁴ property—specifically the law that such property could be leased for a double rent (*vakıflar icareteinlî* in Turkish, διτελή βακούφια in Greek). According to this law, which was introduced by the Ottoman authorities around the seventeenth century, the ephor (*mütevelli*) of a *vakif* could transfer its permanent use and occupation (*tassaruf*), but not its overall ownership (*rekabe*), to an individual for a double rent (*icare*). An initial payment of a large sum of money was made when the agreement was made (*icarei muaccele*). Subsequently a very small sum was paid annually and in perpetuity to the ephor in recognition of ownership of the property (*icarei müeccele*).⁶⁵ So the fact that the Pantokrator metochion had to pay the churchwardens of Aghios Menas three grosia annually as *icare* means that either the whole metochion or part of it was a *vakif* of the church of Aghios Menas. Since the land, funds, and selective holdings of monasteries were recognized as *vakifs*, this is another strong indication of the former monastic status of Aghios Menas.

THE MONASTERY OF AGHIOS MENAS

The fact that the church of 1806 was built on the site of an even older church has never been disputed by scholars. But what remains obscure is whether this older church was a parish church or a monastic katholikon and the date it was destroyed. According

κατά δέ τό βόρριον ἀπό τῆς γωνίας τῆς ἐκκλησίας πήχεων ἔξ, καί μέ ὅλον ὅπου τά πρῶτα τῆς ἐκκλησίας θεμέλια κεῖνται ὑποκάτω τῶν ἄκρων τοῦ αὐτοῦ Μετοχίου, ἐπειδὴ κ[αί] οὕτως ἀπ' ἀρχῆς εὐρέθη κ[αί] ὥρισταί παρὰ τῶν τότε ἐπιστατῶν κ[αί] ἐπιτρόπων τῆς ἐκκλησίας θέλει διαμένει τό μετόχιον ἀπεύρακτο κ[αί] ἀδιάφθαρτον ὡς ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἀπέχον τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὡς ἀνωτέρω ὀρίσται τοῦ ἐν τῷ μεταξύ διαστήματος μένοντος ὑπό τῆς ἐξουσίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας χωρίς νά ἀφαιρεθῇ τι μέρος παρὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, θέλουν διαμένει δέ καί οἱ νεροχῦται ὡς τό πρότερον ρέοντες πρὸς τό εἰρημένον ἔδαφος τῆς ἐκκλησίας παρὰ τά παλαιά θεμέλια. Συνεφωνήθη δέ πρὸς τούτοις ἵνα ἐν καιρῷ ἀνακαινισμού τοῦ αὐτοῦ Μετοχίου τό ὕψος διαμένει ὡς ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς χωρίς νά αὐξηθῇ ποσῶς κ[αί] ἔξωθεν τοῦ Μετοχίου πρὸς τό μέρος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἢ πρὸς τό μεσημβρινοῦ μέρους νά μή προβληθῇ καμμία οἰκοδομή οὔτε κάτω οὔτε ἄνω, καί ταῦτα ἵνα μή διακινδυνεύσῃ ἡ ἐκκλησία ἀπό πυρκαϊᾶς τινός, ἣν μή δώσῃ Κύριος. Θέλει πληρῶνει δέ κατ' ἔτος πρὸς τοὺς ἐπιτρόπους τῆς Ἐκκλησίας λόγῳ Ἰτζιάρé γρόσια τρία . . .

⁶⁴Generally the term *vakif* meant any property, land, or building dedicated to God for the purpose of charity or benevolence. It could be used either for housing a charity or educational or religious foundation, or could be rented out so that the foundation could use the revenue. See J. C. Alexander, “The Monasteries of Meteora during the First Two Centuries of Ottoman Rule,” *JOB* 32.2 (1982), 99–100. Of special interest, but relatively unknown, is N. P. Eleutheriades, *Ἡ ἀκίνητος ἰδιοκτησία ἐν Τουρκίᾳ* (Athens, 1903), 31 ff.

⁶⁵For more details about this law, see Eleutheriades, *Ἡ ἀκίνητος ἰδιοκτησία*, 131–48.

to the oral tradition of the late nineteenth century, conveyed to us by the aforementioned 1885 manuscript,⁶⁶ the original church of Aghios Menas had been bombarded by a Venetian frigate. Its admiral was seeking revenge from the Turks for some offense and mistook the church for a mosque because of its dome. When told that he had destroyed the most beautiful church in the world, he was filled with remorse and donated thousands of gold coins for its restoration. This legend, which perhaps echoes Morosini's bombarding of the Parthenon (1687), is not confirmed by any known written source.⁶⁷ All the same, it has attracted scholarly attention and several attempts have been made to date the destruction. The end of the seventeenth century⁶⁸ or ca. 1770⁶⁹ have been proposed.

In a letter to T. L. F. Tafel,⁷⁰ the French consul in Ioannina, François Pouqueville, reported that Aghios Menas had been burnt down in 1770. Esprit-Marie Cousinéry,⁷¹ French consul in Thessaloniki from 1783 to 1793 and from 1814 to 1818, noticed the ruins of the beautiful church of Aghios Menas, admired the early Christian ambo outside it, and reported that it had been destroyed approximately sixty years earlier. His book was published in 1831; the sixty years are usually reckoned from this year, giving a date of destruction in accordance with that of Pouqueville. If the information in the *vita* of the martyr Christodoulos is accurate, the latter was hanged by the Turks in front of the church of Aghios Menas in 1777.⁷²

The second of the TMA documents answers the first question decisively, but leaves the second unresolved. A translation of a *hüccet*, a contract and an official title deed combined,⁷³ written in A.H. 1173 (= A.D. 1760), states,

in order that the following matter be written and drafted on the site, the Mevlana Hussein Effendi was sent by the court of *kadi*, together with the government architect Mustafa Tchelepi, to the site of the *vakif*, which is a dependency of the *vakifs* of Pantokrator monastery on Mount Athos and situated near *the previously burnt down monastery which stands in the safeguarded Thessaloniki and is known by the name of the "Monastery of Aghios Menas,"* and bounded on the one side by the aforementioned monastery, on the second by a *vakif* house of Jerusalem, on the third by the warehouse of Ziraki, who is a tributary of the Ottoman state, and on the fourth by a public road. . . .⁷⁴

⁶⁶ Vasdravellis, "Βομβαρδισμός," 423–25.

⁶⁷ Thessaloniki was indeed bombarded by the Venetian navy in 1688, but no destruction of a church was reported. See, *ibid.*, 422, and I. K. Vasdravellis, "Συμβολή εις την ιστορίαν της Θεσσαλονίκης κατὰ τὸν ΙΖ' αἰώνα," Προσφορά εις Στίλπωνα Κυριακίδη, *Hellenika*, suppl. 4, (1953), 89–94.

⁶⁸ Vasdravellis, "Βομβαρδισμός," 423, dates the destruction to around 1700, a period of continuous military conflict between the Turks and the Venetians.

⁶⁹ A Vakalopoulos, *Ἱστορία τῆς Μακεδονίας*, 1354–1833 (Thessaloniki, 1988), 289; and Janin, *Centres*, 397.

⁷⁰ T. L. F. Tafel, *De via militari romanorum Egnatia, qua Illyricum, Macedonia et Thracia* (Tübingen, 1842; London, 1972), 10; *idem*, *De Thessalonica eiusque agro: Dissertatio geographica* (Berlin, 1839; London, 1972), 142.

⁷¹ E.-M. Cousinéry, *Voyage dans la Macedoine*, I (Paris, 1828–32), 44: "A côté du quartier franc, en allant vers la douane, on trouve les ruines d'une belle église consacrée à Saint-Minas. Il y a plus de soixante ans qu'elle fut incendiée. Ce qu' on y remarque le plus curieux, est un grand bloc de vert antique, tout à fait semblable à celui de la rotonde. Les grecs modernes ayant adopté la manière européenne de construire leurs chaires, ont retiré ce bloc de l'intérieur de l'église, et l'ont placé dans l'endroit le plus écarté de l'enceinte extérieure . . ."

⁷² A. Letsas, *Ἱστορία τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης*, I (Thessaloniki, 1963), 534.

⁷³ Demetriades, *Τοπογραφία* (as above, note 4), 9.

⁷⁴ TMA document, file "Τουρκικά ἔγγραφα," emphasis added: ἵνα ἡ κάτωθι ἀναφερομένη ὑπόθεσις γραφῇ καὶ συνταχθῇ ἐπὶ τόπου, ἐστάλῃ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ὑπὸ τοῦ ὑψηλοῦ Ἱεροδικείου ὁ Μεβλανάς Χουσεῖν ἐφέντης ὅστις μεταβάς μετὰ τοῦ κυβερνητικοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος Μουσταφᾶ Τσελεπὴ εἰς τὸ Βακουφικὸν οἰκόπεδον, τὸ ἐξαρτώμενον ἐκ τῶν

For this purpose, the council of *kadi* was convened, and before it the monk Daniel, the representative of Pantokrator monastery, stated that on the above-mentioned land, over an area of twenty-four architectural ells (= 18 m) in length and thirteen (= 9.75 m) in width, he had erected a three-storey house of the same height as the existing structure—that is, eleven and one-half ells (= 8.625 m)—and a two-storey house. He had done so as a dedication to the *vakif*, using money derived from the *vakif*, and he requested a *hüccet*. The two buildings were duly examined, and when it had been ascertained that they were not prejudicial to anybody, Daniel was issued a *hüccet*.

The first clear and definite evidence of the monastic status of Aghios Menas is provided by this document. It confirms the information in the 1918 cadastre and justifies the name “Yanik Manastir” (burnt monastery), by which the Turks knew Aghios Menas.⁷⁵ The monastery was burnt down some time before the document was drawn up in 1760, but how long before remains obscure. There is no reference to an extant church of Aghios Menas in the same period. It is worth noting that the appellation of the monastery is in quotation marks, suggesting that it was an area known by this name. As the monastery of Aghios Menas and the *vakif* of Pantokrator monastery are reported to be adjacent in the first TMA document, there is no reason to doubt the location of the first.

Two written sources affirm that the church was operating in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In his account, the French missionary Jean-Baptiste Souciet, who sojourned in Thessaloniki from 1726 to 1733, refers to Aghios Menas as one of the most important orthodox parish churches.⁷⁶ And it is stated in a note written in a codex of the Thessaloniki gymnasium that a certain Makarios was ordained a monk by Metropolitan Methodios in the church of Aghios Menas on November 4, 1694.⁷⁷ According to another undated note in another codex from the same source, a monk named Dometios, served as a cantor in the church of Aghios Menas for two years.⁷⁸

The facts thus remain perplexing. With respect to these problems, the third TMA document is very helpful. It is a translation of a *hüccet* dated A.H. 1060 (= A.D. 1650) and states that

the so-called Priest Daniel Raikou, warden of the buildings mentioned hereafter that are registered in the *vakif* of Pantokrator monastery on Mount Athos and *situated near the*

βακουφίων τῆς ἐν Ἀγίῳ Ὁρει Μονῆς τοῦ Παντοκράτορος καὶ κείμενον παραπλεύρως τῆς ἐν τῇ περιφρουρήτῳ Θεσσαλονίκῃ εὐρισκομένης καὶ ὑπὸ τό ὄνομα “Μονὴ τοῦ Ἀγίου Μηνᾶ” γνωριζομένης ὡς προλαβόντος πυρποληθείσης Μονῆς καὶ περιοριζόμενον ἀφ’ ἐνός ὑπὸ τῆς εἰρημένης Μονῆς, ἀφ’ ἐτέρου ὑπὸ μιᾶς βακουφικῆς οἰκίας τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων, ὑπὸ τρίτου μέρους ὑπὸ ἀποθήκης Ζιράκη, φόρου ὑποτελοῦς ὀθωμανοῦ ὑπηκόου καὶ ὑπὸ τετάρτου μέρους ὑπὸ δημοσίου δρόμου, . . .

⁷⁵ Ibid., 73–75 and 252; Vasdravellis, “Βομβαρδισμός,” 423; and Hatzi-Ioannou, Ἀστυγραφία, 99.

⁷⁶ M. Aimé-Martin, *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses concernant l’Asie, l’Afrique et l’Amérique avec quelques relations nouvelles des missions et des notes géographiques et historiques*, I (Paris, 1838), 76: “Les autres principales églises de Salonique sont les paroisses de Saint-Athanase, de Saint-Nicolas, de Saint-Mennas, de Saint-Constantin . . .” See also, K. Simopoulos, *Ξένοι ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα*, 3rd ed., II (Athens, 1981), 177.

⁷⁷ L. Polites and M. Polites, Κατάλογος χειρογράφων τῆς Ἑθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἀρ. 1857–2500 (Athens, 1991), 89, no. 2038: χηλίους εξακοσίους εναννίτα 4 [1694] νοεμβρίου 12 ἡμερα σαβατο εχρητονιθυκα ηερομοναχος εις τον ναον του αγιου μεγαλομαρτυρος μυνᾶ και με αιχηροτονισεν ο παναγητοατος ημον αφεντης και δεσποτης κτηρος κτηρ Μεθωδης και εσω εις μνημυ. Μακάριος ιερομόναχος και ευχαίτης ημων.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 74, no. 2007: Εγω ο παπ(α) Δεμετοίος [Δομέτιος;] ὦ ιερομοναχῶς εψαλα τὸν μεγαλομάρτηράν Μινᾶ χροῦνοῦς β’ καὶ ευχέστέ με διὰ τὸν Κ(ύριο)ν.

*“Tophâne” of the safeguarded Thessaloniki beside the previously burnt down monastery of Aghios Menas, has stated orally before the supreme and venerable council that the buildings of which he is the warden, which are bounded on two sides by the wall and the yard of the church of Aghios Menas, on the third side by a special road (that is a cul-de-sac), and on the fourth side by a public street, and [which] comprise on the upper floor three rooms and a chamber, on the mezzanine four rooms, and under these one room, one coal cellar, and a yard, belong to the aforementioned vakifs, and that the vakifname and the relevant titles were burnt some time ago. For this reason he requests, as warden, that the people who occupy and use them under icare with the permission of the above-mentioned vakif, be questioned. . . .*⁷⁹

The document goes on to recount that the occupiers were duly questioned and replied that the buildings described above did indeed belong to the *vakif* of Pantokrator monastery, whose warden was the priest Daniel, and that they were occupying and using them under *icare* with permission.

The third document sets the date of the destruction of the monastery of Aghios Menas even earlier, before 1650. More important, however, is the statement that, presumably, while the monastery was burnt down, the church was not. The document refers to “the wall of the church,” but does not state whether it was burnt or not (as it does explicitly in the case of the monastery), which suggests that it was operating at that time. There are two possible conclusions: either the church was burnt down together with its surrounding monastic establishments and was subsequently rebuilt, or, more likely, it was not destroyed at the same time as the rest. In the latter case, we must distinguish between the destruction of the monastery and the destruction of the church. The institution of the *icare* is mentioned again, but here the owner is Pantokrator monastery.

The TMA documents confirm that Aghios Menas was a monastery, at least for a time. Interpreting all the documents together, one concludes that the buildings erected by the monk Daniel just before 1760 were in addition to Pantokrator monastery’s existing houses mentioned in the document of 1650. Daniels’ buildings would seem to have comprised the lodging house built on “the original foundations of the church,” as mentioned in the document of 1806. For this addition, Pantokrator monastery paid three grosia as *icare* to the church of Aghios Menas. Obviously the church’s destruction should be dated to before 1760. So Cousinéry’s “sixty years” should be subtracted from the date of his first sojourn in Thessaloniki (1783 to 1793).

It seems that the history goes like this: The monastery, but not the church, was destroyed some time before 1650. The great fire that devastated Thessaloniki in 1620⁸⁰

⁷⁹TMA document, file “Τουρκικά έγγραφα,” emphasis added: ὁ λεγόμενος Παπᾶ Δανιήλ Ραΐκου, ἐπίτροπος τῶν κάτωθι ἀναφερομένων οἰκημάτων, τῶν συγκαταριθμουμένων εἰς τὸ Βακούφιον τῆς ἐν Ἀγίῳ Ὁρει Μονῆς τοῦ Παντοκράτορος καὶ κειμένων πλησίον τοῦ “Τοπχανέ” τῆς περιφρουρήτου Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ παραπλεύρως τῆς πρότινος πυρποληθείσης Μονῆς τοῦ Ἀγίου Μηνᾶ ἐδήλωσε προφορικῶς ἐνώπιον τοῦ Ὑψηλοῦ ἀξιοσεβάστου Ἱερονομικοῦ Συμβουλίου ὅτι τὰ ὦν τυγχάνει εἰσεῖτι ἐπίτροπος οἰκήματα, τὰ περιοριζόμενα ἀπὸ δύο μερῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ τείχους καὶ αὐλῆς τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Ἀγ. Μηνᾶ ἀφ’ ἐτέρου ὑπὸ εἰδικοῦ (ἤτοι ἀδιεξόδου) δρόμου καὶ ὑπὸ τετάρτου μέρους ὑπὸ δημοσίου δρόμου καὶ περιέχοντα εἰς μὲν τὸ ἀνώτατον πάτωμα τρία ἀνώγεα δωμάτια καὶ μίαν αἰθουσαν εἰς δὲ τὸ μεσαῖον τέσσερα δωμάτια, κάτωθεν δὲ τούτων ἐν δωμάτιον μίαν ἀνθρακαποθήκην καὶ αὐλὴν, ἀνήκουσαν εἰς τὰ εἰρημένα βακούφια ὅτι ὁ βακουφναμέσ καὶ οἱ σχετικοὶ τίτλοι τοῦ ἐκάστησαν πρότινος, ἐνεκα δὲ τούτου θέλει ὡς ἐπίτροπος νὰ ἐρωτηθῶσιν, οἱ ἔχοντες αὐτὰ ὑπὸ τὴν νομὴν καὶ κατοχὴν τῶν ἐπὶ διτελείᾳ τῇ ἀδείᾳ τοῦ εἰρημένου Βακούφιου . . .

⁸⁰Demetriades, Τοπογραφία, 458, and K. Mertzios, Μνημεῖα Μακεδονικῆς Ἱστορίας (Thessaloniki, 1947), 176.

could be the event we are seeking. As we have seen, Aghios Menas once owned a large piece of land, and the whole block may have been occupied by the monastery (Fig. 3). After the disaster, the devastated area around the church was partially occupied by the metochion of Pantokrator monastery to begin with and afterwards by a *vakif* of the Holy Sepulcher. The church itself was probably destroyed in the middle of the eighteenth century. The monks of Pantokrator then seized part of the land and extended their property over the ruins of the church. In the nineteenth century another adjacent piece of land belonged to the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. The precinct of the monastery was turned into a marketplace. On it the Greek community erected shops to increase its revenues. Thus the present spatial organization of the Aghios Menas block, which encloses the monument, is not reminiscent of the monastic establishments, but is due to the excessive use of land. The same documents resolve the problem of the appellation of the central tower on the sea walls. Tophâne (Gunpowder Tower) was near Aghios Menas, which means that it must have been the tower at the east end of the Roman port.⁸¹

So, although the exact date of the monastery's destruction still eludes us, a *terminus ante quem*, at least, has been established. A note in a codex of the Thessaloniki gymnasium reports that in 1569 Sultan Selim II ravaged the churches of Thessaloniki. The note asserts that he took six columns from the church of Aghios Menas, and adds that three others were taken from the ground, without specifying whose ground.⁸² This information possibly offers another point of departure for considering the problem. How was this removal carried out without precipitating the collapse of the building? Or was it already in ruins? Perhaps the church still stood, but the monastic establishments had been burnt down. According to the registrations in the *kanunnâme* of 1525, two monks, but no priest, were residing in the district of Aghios Menas, another indication of the monastery's existence.⁸³

Curiously, the written sources, and especially the documents of the Athonite monasteries, which are often generous with topographical data about Thessaloniki, make no mention of a monastery of Aghios Menas. Instead they often mention the neighborhood of Aghios Menas with reference to monastery properties. Thus in 1569 the Great Laura owned eight rooms (a lodging house?) and a church of Aghia Marina near Aghios Menas.⁸⁴ In 1432 Constantine Magklabites applied to the Nea Mone to rent him a

⁸¹This information is in accord with the information drawn from a Turkish officer's report dated 1732. See I. K. Vasdravellis, 'Ιστορικά ἀρχεῖα Μακεδονίας, A; 'Αρχεῖον Θεσσαλονίκης (1695–1912) (Thessaloniki, 1952), 201. The names of the sea-wall towers have been the subject of dispute among scholars: M. Vickers, "The Byzantine Sea Walls of Thessaloniki," *Balkan Studies* 11 (1970), 266–68; C. Bakirtzis, "Ἡ θαλάσσια ὀχύρωση τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης," *Byzantina* 7 (1975), 305–6; E. Marki, "Συμπληρωματικά στοιχεία γιὰ τὸ φρούριο Βαρδάρου," *Makedonika* 22 (1982), 149–52; G. Tsaras, "Τοπογραφικὰ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης II," *Makedonika* 22 (1982), 64–78; Spieser, *Thessalonique* (as above, note 24), 32–34.

⁸²A. Vakalopoulos, "Ὑπῆρξε ἐπὶ Τουρκοκρατίας μητροπολιτικὸς ναὸς ὁ 'Αγ. Γεώργιος (Rotonda) καὶ τότε;" *Makedonika* 4 (1955–60), 548–49; Polites and Polites, *Κατάλογος*, 155, no. 2118: ἔτους ζοζ' [=1569] μηνὸς αὐγούστου. Ἐστίλειν ὁ σοῦλτάν Σαΐλεϊμ νὰ πάρῃ τὰ κιόνά ἐκ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν· ἔλαβεν δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ναὸν τοῦ αἰγίου Μητὰ κιόνά ζ' καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ ἑδάφος τρία καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἰπομνήσκοντος κιόνια γ' καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν μ(η)ρ(ό)π(ο)λ(ιν) κυῶνας η'.

⁸³V. Demetriades, "Ὁ Kanunnâme καὶ οἱ Χριστιανοὶ κάτοικοι τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης γύρω στὰ 1525" *Makedonika* 19 (1979), 356, 12, a 1, lines 13 and 14.

⁸⁴See above, note 38.

linseed-oil press in the neighborhood of Aghios Menas.⁸⁵ In 1400 a perfumery, belonging to Hypomimneskon monastery and other churches and monasteries in Thessaloniki, existed near Aghios Menas.⁸⁶ In 1324 a certain Chalkeopoulos transferred a mill in the neighborhood of Aghios Menas to Manuel Koullourakes.⁸⁷ In 1314 the senior presbyter of Aghios Menas, Theodore Katabas, witnessed the last will and testament of Theodore Karabas, probably one of his parishioners, who owned landed property in this area.⁸⁸ In 1089 Xenophon monastery owned several houses near Aghios Menas, purchased by the hegumen Symeon.⁸⁹

A possible, though weak, indication of the existence of a monastery of Aghios Menas is the signature of the monk “Ioannikios of Aghios Menas,” who witnessed an act of 1057 of the monastery of St. Panteleemon.⁹⁰ The act does not mention the location of Ioannikios’ monastery, making an identification with Aghios Menas in Thessaloniki uncertain.⁹¹

Codex 2953 in the Bibliothèque Nationale contains notes written by an anonymous employee of the Metropolis of Thessaloniki. They concern the financial transactions for the period 1419 through 1437 between the Metropolis and six churches (probably the most important and wealthiest). The churches conferred a proportion of their revenues upon the Metropolis. Eight entries from 1419 to 1426 refer to Aghios Menas alone.⁹² As the other five churches—(Aghia Sophia, Aghios Demetrios, Panaghia Acheiropoietos, Aghioi Asomatoi, and Hodegetria)—were parish churches,⁹³ and as Aghios Menas had a senior presbyter⁹⁴ (and not a hegumen), Aghios Menas should have been functioning as a parish church at that time.

A note in a codex of the Thessaloniki gymnasium, written sometime in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, points to the same conclusion. It refers to the donation of the codex by the hegumen of Akapniou monastery, Mattheus, to the church of Aghios Me-

⁸⁵ P. Lemerle et al., *Actes de Lavra*, pt. 3: *De 1329 à 1500*, Archives de l’Athos 10 (Paris, 1979), 184, no. 168 (1432), lines 4–5: “τὸ κ(α)τ(ὰ) τὴν γειτονίαν τοῦ ἁγίου Μηνᾶ δεσποτικῶς μὲν προσὸν τῇ σε(βασμὶ)α ταῦτη μονὴ συνιστάμενον (καὶ) διενεργούμενον λινελαι - ὀτριβικὸν ἐργαστήριον) . . .

⁸⁶ MM 2:525, no. 664 (1400): τὸ περὶ τὸν ἅγιον Μηνᾶν μυρεψικὸν ἐργαστήριον . . . , and J. Darrouzès, *Les registres des actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, I, fasc. 6: *Les registres de 1377 à 1410* (Paris, 1979), 388, no. 3149.

⁸⁷ L. Petit and B. Korabiev, *Actes de Chilandar*, Actes de l’Athos 5 (Paris, 1911), 204, no. 97 (1324), lines 13–16: ὁ δηλωθεὶς ἐκεῖνος σύζυγός σου ὁ Χαλκεόπουλος οἶκημα κεκτημένος γονικόθεν μονόρρυτον εἰς μύλωνα χρηματίζον μετὰ προσώπων, κατὰ τὴν γειτονίαν τοῦ ἁγίου μεγαλομάρτυρος Μηνᾶ καὶ ἐν ἀνακεκοινωμένῃ αὐλῇ μετὰ διαφόρων προσώπων, ἀνταλλαγῆς τρόπῳ πρὸς με διαβιβάζει, . . .

⁸⁸ Ibid., 59, no. 27 (1314), lines 8–9: ἐντ>αυθοὶ συνεληλυθόντων θεοσεβάστων ἱερέων, τοῦ τε πρωτοπαπᾶ τῆς γειτονίας τοῦ μεγαλομάρτυρος ἁγίου Μηνᾶ κύρ Θεοδόρου τοῦ Καταβᾶ . . .”; and 60, no. 27 (1314), lines 21–24: “ἔχω . . . ἐν τῇ γειτονίᾳ τοῦ μεγαλομάρτυρος ἁγίου Μηνᾶ . . . οἰκήματα ἔξ, . . .”

⁸⁹ D. Papachryssanthou, *Actes de Xénophon*, Archives de l’Athos 15 (Paris, 1986), 73, no. 1 (1089), line 153: ἔτερα ὁσπῆ(τα) πλησίον τοῦ Ἁγίου Μηνᾶ τὰ ἐξωνηθέντα παρὰ σοῦ. . .

⁹⁰ P. Lemerle et al., *Actes de Saint-Pantéléemôn*, Archives de l’Athos 12 (Paris, 1982), 59, no. 5 (1057), line 44: + Ἰωάννικιο(ς) (μον)αχὸς τοῦ ἁγίου Μηνᾶ τ(ὸν) μὲν τίμι(ον) σταυρὸν ιδιοχ(εῖρως) το (δὲ) ὕφο(ς) χειρὶ Ἰακώβου τοῦ ἁγίου υπ(ἐγραψα):—

⁹¹ Ibid., 54.

⁹² S. Kugéas, “Notizbuch eines Beamten der Metropolis in Thessalonike aus dem Anfang des XV. Jahrhunderts,” *BZ* 14 (1914–20), 144–54, nos. 7, 8, 19, 21, 35, 36, 47, 51. The author identifies the employee with Ioannis Eugenikos.

⁹³ Janin, *Centres* (as above, note 3), 355, 369, 376, 382, and 408.

⁹⁴ Kugéas, “Notizbuch,” 148, no. 51 (1426): ἔδωκέ μοι ὁ Καβάσιλας διὰ τοῦ πρωτοπαπᾶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Μηνᾶ . . . ; for Kabasilas, see *PLP* 5 (Vienna, 1981), 7, no. 10066.

nas.⁹⁵ Aghios Menas is not mentioned by Ignatius of Smolensk, who visited Thessaloniki in 1405,⁹⁶ nor by Thessaloniki archbishop Symeon (1416/17–1429).⁹⁷

The life of St. Gregory the Decapolite is the first known written source attesting the existence of a church of Aghios Menas in Thessaloniki. The saint stayed in Thessaloniki for a while in 834, lodging near the church of Aghios Menas.⁹⁸ The text also implies that the church was very close to the tomb of Hosios David,⁹⁹ which was either outside the walls or somewhere near the acropolis. Thus Cyril Mango questions the location of the original church of Aghios Menas.¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, the account of the miracles of St. Demetrios attests the existence, ca. 615, of an exulted church of the Virgin near Thessaloniki's port,¹⁰¹ a location that probably coincides with that of Aghios Menas.¹⁰²

Another rather odd fact is that at the end of the Turkish period there was no district named Aghios Menas in Thessaloniki.¹⁰³ The last known reference to a neighborhood of this name is found in the *kanunnâme* of 1525.¹⁰⁴ The name is also encountered in the Turkish cadastral surveys (*tahrir defters*) of 1478.¹⁰⁵ At the end of the nineteenth century, the church itself was situated in the area of the market. A district called Yanik Manastir, located near the west city wall at quite some distance from Aghios Menas and not including it, was assigned as its parish.¹⁰⁶ The attribution of the name "Yanik Manastir" to Aghios Menas understandably posed questions. Vasiles Demetriades tried to resolve

⁹⁵ Polites and Polites, *Κατάλογος*, 134, no. 2096: Τοῦ καθηγουμένου τῆς σ(ε)βασμίας μον(ῆ)ς τοῦ Ἀκαμίνου [γρ. Ἀκαπνίου;] κυροῦ Μαθέου αφυερόθη ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ ἁγίου μεγαλομάρτυρος Μηνᾶ· ὅτῃς τὸ πᾶ[ρα]ρι νὰ ἔχη τον τριακοσίον δέκα θεοφόρον πατέρον.

⁹⁶ The first systematic analysis of Ignatius' text on Thessaloniki was done by M. Laskaris, "Ναοὶ καὶ μοναὶ Θεσσαλονίκης τὸ 1405 εἰς τὸ ὁδοιπορικὸν τοῦ ἐκ Σμολένσκ Ἰγνατίου," in Τόμος Κωνσταντίνου Ἀρμενοπούλου, Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Σχολῆς Νομικῶν καὶ Οἰκονομικῶν Ἐπιστημῶν τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης 6 (Thessaloniki, 1952), 315–44. For a recent re-reading and evaluation, see M. L. Rautman, "Ignatius of Smolensk and the Late Byzantine Monasteries of Thessaloniki," *REB* 49 (1991), 143–69.

⁹⁷ I. Phountoulis, "Μαρτυρίαι τοῦ Θεσσαλονίκης Συμεῶν περὶ τῶν ναῶν τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης," Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης 21 (1976), 123–86.

⁹⁸ F. Dvornik, *La vie de Saint Grégoire le Décapolite et les Slaves macédoniens au IX^e siècle* (Paris, 1926), 58, lines 24–25: Τῇ δὲ Θεσσαλονικῇ προσπελάσας καὶ πρὸς τῷ ναῷ τοῦ ἁγίου μάρτυρος Μηνᾶ μονὴν ποιησάμενος, . . . This excerpt was explained initially as meaning that he stayed in the convent of Aghios Menas: *ibid.*, 22. More recently, C. Mango, "On Re-reading the Life of St. Gregory the Decapolite," *Byzantina* 13.1 (1985), 638, has proposed that the text means rather that he lodged near the church, an explanation with which I also agree. See also, M. I. Gedeon, *Βυζαντινὸν ἑορτολόγιον* (Constantinople, 1899), 193; and Janin, *Centres*, 397.

⁹⁹ Dvornik, *Saint Grégoire*, 64, lines 9–10: «Πορεύου καὶ τῇ σορῷ Δαβείδ τοῦ ὁσίου προσέγγιζε» — οὐ γὰρ πόρρωθεν ἦν —, . . .

¹⁰⁰ Mango, "St. Gregory," 638.

¹⁰¹ P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, I (text) (Paris, 1979), 176, lines 25–27: Τάφρον δὲ τότε πρὸς τῷ πανυμνήτῳ τεμένει τῆς ἀχράντου Θεοτόκου τῷ ὄντι πρὸς τῷ αὐτῷ λιμένι ἐποιήσαντο, ἀτειχίστου τοῦ τοιοῦτου καθεστῶτος τόπου, ὡς ἅπαντες ἐπίστανται, . . . Lemerle dates the assault by the Sklavenes of Chatzon on Thessaloniki to within a year of 615: *ibid.*, II (commentary) (Paris, 1981), 96.

¹⁰² This view was first expressed by Bakirtzis, "Θαλάσσια ὀχύρωση," 330–31.

¹⁰³ As recorded in the Turkish tax registers (*esas*) of 1906: Demetriades, *Τοπογραφία*, 73–74.

¹⁰⁴ Demetriades, "Kanunnâme," 339 and 355–58.

¹⁰⁵ H. W. Lowry, "Portrait of a City: The Population and Topography of Ottoman Selânik (Thessaloniki) in the Year 1478," in *Studies in Defterology: Ottoman Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Istanbul, 1992), 84.

¹⁰⁶ Demetriades, *Τοπογραφία*, 73–74 and 190–99.

these problems by extending the Byzantine district of Aghios Menas.¹⁰⁷ His theory was refuted by Georgios Theocharides, who maintained that Yanik Manastir had nothing to do with Aghios Menas, but in fact referred to another monument built on the site of a Theodosian octagon.¹⁰⁸ Although the evidence shows that Aghios Menas was indeed a *yanik manastir*, the problem of its district still remains unresolved.

Byzantinists are perplexed and hesitate to propose the existence of a monastery. So far there is undisputed historical evidence of a monastery of Aghios Menas in Thessaloniki during the Turkish period, but uncertain, weak, and often conflicting evidence that it existed in the Byzantine era. There seem to be three possible hypotheses:

1. The existence of the monastery was taken for granted in the Byzantine period, and the written sources merely omit it. This is much too simple an explanation, for most of the written sources specifically mention the other monasteries in the city.

2. The monastery of Aghios Menas in the Ottoman period should be distinguished from the parish church of Aghios Menas in the Byzantine era. In this case, the saint's cult should have been transferred from one monument to the other. Aghios Menas was a different church, which was converted into a mosque after 1430, while the church on the site of the present Aghios Menas was dedicated to another saint. Apart from the several problems that this theory creates, it also distorts the known picture of Thessaloniki's topography.¹⁰⁹ So far, every attempt to reconstitute the city's topography has been based on the crucial presumption that the church of Aghios Menas, and accordingly its district, has occupied the present location since at least the ninth century.

3. The monastery was founded, or re-established, after the Turkish conquest of Thessaloniki. The years after 1430 were a critical period of urban transformation.¹¹⁰ We also know that monasteries were flourishing in the first half of the sixteenth century. During this period a great many monasteries were founded or re-established and many *katholikon*s were built.¹¹¹ This was due to such propitious factors as the enduring peace, the strengthening of the Orthodox Church's role in the life of the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire, favorable laws, tax exemptions, and other privileges.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 27–28.

¹⁰⁸ G. Theocharides, "Review of V. Demetriades, *Τοπογραφία της Θεσσαλονίκης κατά την εποχή της τουρκοκρατίας, 1430–1912*," *Makedonika* 23 (1983), 378–82. For the existence of this unknown octagon, see E. Marki, "Ένας άγνωστος οκταγωνικός ναός στη Θεσσαλονίκη," *Makedonika* 23 (1983), 117–32. On his map, Tafrali locates Yanik Manastir near the church of Aghioi Apostoloi, where ruins of the gate of the monastery are found. Tafrali, *Topographie* (as above, note 2), map; G. Velenis, "Ο πυλώνας της μονής των Αγίων Αποστόλων Θεσσαλονίκης," *Makedonika* (Αφιέρωμα στο Σ. Πελεκανίδη) 5 (1983), 23–35.

¹⁰⁹ As reconstituted in the major studies on Thessaloniki's topography. Tafrali, *Topographie*; G. Theocharides, *Τοπογραφία και πολιτική ιστορία της Θεσσαλονίκης κατά τον 14' αιώνα* (Thessaloniki, 1959); Lowry, "Selânik," 65–100; Demetriades, *Τοπογραφία*.

¹¹⁰ S. Vryonis, Jr., "The Ottoman Conquest of Thessaloniki," in *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society*, ed. A. Bryer and H. Lowry (Birmingham, U.K.,-Washington, D.C., 1986), 313–21.

¹¹¹ A rough catalogue of these monasteries is given by C. Patrinely, "Ο ελληνοισμός κατά την πρώιμη τουρκοκρατία (1453–1600). Γενικές παρατηρήσεις και συσχετισμοί με την ιστορική εξέλιξη της μεταβυζαντινής τέχνης," *Δελτ.Χριστ.Αρχ.* Έτ. 16 (1991–92), 36–37. This prosperity was abruptly halted in 1568 by the decision of Sultan Selim II to confiscate the ecclesiastical and monastic properties. In subsequent years, the monasteries bought back their properties by borrowing heavily, which led them into economic depression.

¹¹² C. Bouras, "Η εκκλησιαστική αρχιτεκτονική κατά τον 16ο αιώνα," *Proceedings of the 11th Conference of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Archaeology and Art* (Athens, 1991), 26–27.

This third hypothesis seems to be the most plausible, but since none of them is supported by solid historical evidence, we must be content merely to state the problem, leaving the solution until further information is discovered.

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN MONUMENT

Scholars¹¹³ have dated the main sanctuary apse of Aghios Menas¹¹⁴ (Figs. 2 and 5) to the early Christian period, without offering arguments for their opinion. The apse is semicircular and disproportionately large for the east facade of the present monument, which suggests that it was built for a larger one. It is composed of two distinct parts: the lower part, rising from the ground to the window sills, and the upper part, comprising the windows and the roof. Semicircular apses were built in Thessaloniki in the early Christian period, being replaced by semihexagonal ones in the seventh century and polygonal ones later, the first example of the latter being the apse of Aghia Sophia. The shape of the Aghios Menas apse indicates that its lower part dates from the early Christian period.

The lower part has a diameter of 11.8 m, including the thickness of the masonry. The wall is 1.7 m thick and 1.98 to 2.07 m high, measured from the present ground level.¹¹⁵ It is built of rubble stone courses alternating with bands of bricks. Three courses of stone 0.27 m, 0.56 to 0.57 m, and 0.25 to 0.29 m high,¹¹⁶ respectively, are discernible. They alternate with a five-course band of bricks, 0.4 m high, and a four-course band of bricks, 0.3 m high. There is another, single course band under the eave. The joints are as thick as, or slightly thicker than, one brick. The longest brick observed measures 39 cm.¹¹⁷ The bricks are 4 to 4.5 cm thick. The mortar is pink in color, indicating the existence of crush-tile dust among its constituent materials.

It is useful to compare these measurements with those of other early Christian structures in Thessaloniki. The masonry of the sanctuary of Aghios Demetrios comprises four-course and six-course bands of bricks (the majority of which measure 32 to 36 cm in length) alternating with rubble stone courses 0.64 to 0.70 m, 0.51 to 0.52 m, and 0.40 to 0.41 m high. The masonry of the lower part of the apse of Panaghia Acheiropoietos, which belongs to the original structure dated to the third quarter of the fifth century,¹¹⁸ comprises three-course bands of bricks (the majority of which measure 30 to 31 cm in

¹¹³G. A. Sotiriou, *Βυζαντινή καὶ μεταβυζαντινὴ ἀρχαιολογία* (Athens, 1942), 502; and T. Papazotos, "Ο ναός του Αγίου Μηνά," in *Η Θεσσαλονίκη και τα μνημεία της* (Thessaloniki, 1985), 75. Neither author supports this opinion with arguments.

¹¹⁴Restoration work has taken place recently, but nothing has been published as yet.

¹¹⁵This part may originally have been higher since we cannot rule out the possibility of embankment. The bottom row of the surviving holes for the scaffolding is placed at a rather low height, which suggests that the original ground level was below the present one.

¹¹⁶These figures are obtained from measurements made on the outer surface of the apse. The bottom stone course is hidden by a low step surrounding the apse. It looks like part of the upper stone course was removed in order that the apse be adjusted to a desired height.

¹¹⁷The length of the bricks cannot be measured with precision. Some bricks are broken, while others are partly covered by mortar. Additionally, observation at the outer surface of the apse does not provide enough information about the way the bricks are laid within the masonry, and subsequently their shape and size. The reemployment of bricks older than the first building phase of the apse cannot be ruled out. This is the case for the other structures mentioned below as well.

¹¹⁸The measurements refer to the part of the apse that is not covered by plaster. For the dating of Panaghia Acheiropoietos, see C. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, *Βυζαντινὴ Θεσσαλονίκη*, 2nd ed. (Thessaloniki, 1992), 55–58.

length) alternating with rubble stone courses 0.94 to 1.03 m high. The masonry of the part of the Rotunda apse that is dated to the first Christian phase comprises four-course bands of bricks alternating with rubble stone courses 0.90 to 0.94 m and 0.87 to 0.90 m high. The usual brick length is 30 to 32 cm, with a few bricks measuring 46 to 47 cm. These statistics reveal a similarity between the masonries of the Aghios Menas apse and the Aghios Demetrios apse concerning the height of the rubble stone courses in relation to the height of the bands of bricks. This similarity may serve as an indication for a more precise dating of the lower portion of the Aghios Menas apse, although the Aghios Demetrios apse has been variously dated to the fifth and even the early sixth century.¹¹⁹

The upper part of the apse, which contains the windows, is 1 m thick and partly covered by plaster at present. The uncovered part reveals a less carefully built masonry, of a mostly liberal mixture of bricks and stones. Only one, four-course band of bricks is discernible under the single dentil course of the eaves. The different masonries suggest two different building phases.

The apse has three large, plain, and arched windows. This window type was employed from the early Christian to the middle and late Byzantine period, but is not encountered in Thessalonian early Christian basilicas, which as a rule have multilight mullioned windows.¹²⁰ In both the Panaghia Acheiropoietos and Rotunda apses, the original five-light mullioned windows were remodeled in later phases as single, arched windows separated by brick piers.¹²¹ According to Kalliopi Theoharidou, these repairs may be related chronologically to the first phase of Aghia Sophia (618–630).¹²²

The window arches are constructed with two superimposed courses of bricks radiating from the curve. These bricks are 30 to 32 cm long and 4 to 4.5 cm. thick. The extradoses are marked by another course of bricks, each positioned at a tangent to the curve. This technique, often seen in monuments of the middle Byzantine period in west Macedonia,¹²³ was not used in the Rotunda, Panaghia Acheiropoietos, Aghia Sophia, or Aghios Demetrios and indicates a later date of construction for the windows of the Aghios Menas apse.

A semidome covers the apse. Externally it is crowned by a triple-stepped arrangement, formed by two semicylindrical features with successively smaller diameters, placed

¹¹⁹G. Sotiriou and M. Sotiriou, *Ἡ βασιλικὴ τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης* (Athens, 1952), 105–13 and 143–44, and Spieser, *Thessalonique*, 198–99, agree that the apse of the present church of Aghios Demetrios belongs to the first building phase of the monument. This phase has been variously dated. The Sotirious date it to the fifth century. M. Vickers, “Fifth-Century Brickstamps from Thessaloniki,” *BSA* 68 (1973), 285–94, suggests a dating near the middle of the fifth century. E. Kleinbauer follows him in “Some Observations on the Dating of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki,” *Byzantion* 40 (1970), 36–42. R. Cormack, “The Mosaic Decoration of S. Demetrios,” *BSA* 64 (1969), 17–52, proposes the end of the fifth century. Finally, Spieser, *Thessalonique*, 210–12, dates it to around 510–520.

¹²⁰K. Theoharidou, *The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki, from Its Erection up to the Turkish Conquest*, BAR 399 (Oxford, 1988), 110 and 213, n. 58.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 129–30; Theoharidou, “Ἡ Ροτόντα της Θεσσαλονίκης. Νέα στοιχεία και αποσαφηνίσεις με αφορμή τις αναστηλωτικές εργασίες,” *Δελτ.Χριστ.Αρχ.* Έτ. 16 (1991–92), 70; P. Oraïopoulos, “Μιά άλλη άποψη για τη διαμόρφωση της παλαιοχριστιανικής κόγχης της Αχειροποιήτου,” *Thessaloniki* 3 (1992), 11–30.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 129–30.

¹²³For an analysis and examples of this technique, see G. Velenis, “Ερμηνεία του εξωτερικού διακόσμου στη Βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική,” *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Πολυτεχνικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 8, suppl. 10 (1984), I (text), 83–84; II (illustrations and drawings), ill. 38b, 39, and dr. 33.

one on top of the other. Four other major churches in Thessaloniki display a similar feature. The Rotunda apse's roof dates from the third Christian phase, in the early seventh century, after the great earthquake that struck the city.¹²⁴ The roof of the apse of Panaghia Acheiropoietos is a result of a much later phase than the original church, as recent, unpublished, investigations have shown.¹²⁵ In the second construction phase, and possibly in the first, of the present Aghia Sophia, the upper zone of the apse wall was recessed.¹²⁶ This feature originates in the early Christian tradition¹²⁷ and can also be seen in the basilica of Aghios Demetrios, whose apse belongs to the original church.¹²⁸ The same feature (although double-stepped) is also used in Thessaloniki's post-Byzantine basilicas, such as Panaghia Gorgoepekoos (Panaghouda) (1818) and Hypapanti (1841). It was probably employed to relieve the weight of the vault and concurrently to reduce building expenses.

Two small pilasters, generating from the outer semicylinder of the upper portion, flank the second semicylinder of the roof. Similar pilasters are employed in Panaghia Acheiropoietos, Aghios Demetrios, and the Rotunda, but in these cases they generate from the semicylinder of the lower part of the apse and flank the semicylinder of the upper part, not the semicylinder of the roof. Their purpose is to reinforce the frontal arch of the semidome that bears the load of the superimposed east wall.

In view of the above observations, I conclude that the present form of the Aghios Menas apse is due to two different building phases. The first (which includes the lower part) may date from the fifth or even the early sixth century. This neatly ties in with the dating of the sculptural decoration (discussed below) to the end of the fifth century. The dating of the second phase is obscure. The overall height of the apse, equal to 8.9 m at the key of the arch, is rather low, perhaps reflecting Ottoman restrictions on the height of churches. The windows are rather squat, reminiscent of post-Byzantine examples. The masonry and construction techniques have a somewhat rough-and-ready aspect. These features suggest that the upper part of the Aghios Menas apse may be dated to the Turkish occupation of the city, perhaps to when the church was rebuilt in 1806. If the upper part of the apse dates from the middle or even the late Byzantine period, then all its proportions, as also the windows, would have been slender, while the masonry, especially the window arches, would have been more carefully constructed. A dating to the monument's last rebuilding in 1852 seems unlikely because of the eaves. The apse has dentil eaves originating in the Byzantine tradition, while the main body of the church has concave neoclassical ones. The two subsidiary apses also have dentil eaves. They are added on to the main sanctuary apse, imitating its style, and they probably date to the rebuilding of 1852.

The *vita* of St. Gregory the Decapolite gives a hint about one of the building phases of the church of Aghios Menas. A monk named Zacharias had built the σηκὸς of Aghios

¹²⁴Theoharidou, "Ποτόντα," 68–71.

¹²⁵Theoharidou, *Hagia Sophia*, 211, n. 31.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 105–6.

¹²⁷A. Orlandos, 'Ἡ ξυλόστεγος παλαιοχριστιανικὴ βασιλικὴ τῆς μεσογειακῆς λεκάνης (Athens, 1952), I, 218–19, and II, 569–71. For further examples, see Theoharidou, *Hagia Sophia*, 106.

¹²⁸See above, note 119.

Menas¹²⁹ shortly before Gregory's second visit to Thessaloniki, around 834.¹³⁰ This information should be treated with caution: What exactly does the writer mean by the term "σηκὸς"? The church's sanctuary or the church itself? Furthermore, before applying the information to this particular church, we must make sure that it was dedicated to Aghios Menas at that time. This is only a presumption already investigated above. We should also explore the possibility that there were two churches dedicated to Aghios Menas in ninth-century Thessaloniki. We do know that after the end of the eighth century, when the Slavs had been crushed and the Byzantine Empire in Greece and the Balkans reorganized, Thessaloniki began to recover economically and politically. This resurgence makes a building phase (but of which monument?) at that time quite plausible.¹³¹

The well-known early Christian ambo of Aghios Menas, much admired by visitors to the city,¹³² is kept at present in the apse.¹³³ It has recently been related to the ambon of Aghios Demetrios (in terms of typology) and to that of the Rotunda (in terms of decoration), for which an approximate dating to the first half of the sixth century is proposed by Jean-Pierre Sodini.¹³⁴ According to Anastasios Orlandos,¹³⁵ it belongs in the same category as the ambos of Panaghia Acheiropoietos, Aghia Sophia, and the Octagon. Two early Christian capitals¹³⁶ re-employed on the west facade of the existing monument are attributed to the end of the fifth century, as are the panel¹³⁷ and the two small iconostasis pillars incorporated in the northwest corner. Fifteen fragments of sculpture depicting animals and birds were detached from the monument in 1916 and were kept at the Byzantine Museum in Athens.¹³⁸ Recently they have been returned to the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki. Kondakov saw about a dozen of them, separated and broken, on the church and its surrounding wall in 1900.¹³⁹ According to the aforementioned manuscript of 1885, the church was a masterpiece and was popularly called the "Ark," because its walls were covered with sculptured pairs of animals in scenes from Noah's ark.¹⁴⁰ The fragments are probably from a cornice that decorated the interior walls¹⁴¹ of the church; they too have been dated to the end of the fifth century.

¹²⁹ Dvornik, *Saint Grégoire*, 63, lines 22–23: "Ἄλλος δέ τις ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ προσοικῶν μοναχός, ὃ ὄνομα Ζαχαρίας, ὃς καὶ τὸν σηκὸν Μηνᾶ τοῦ μάρτυρος ἐδείματο, . . ."

¹³⁰ Mango, "St. Gregory," 638.

¹³¹ A. Vakalopoulos, *Ἱστορία τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης*, 316π.X–1983 (Thessaloniki, 1983), 93–102.

¹³² Leake, *Northern Greece* (as above, note 57), 243; and Cousinéry, *Macedoine* (as above, note 71), 44.

¹³³ It was seen here by Kondakov in 1900. Kondakov, *Makedonija* (as above, note 1), 122–23. See also C. Diehl, M. Le Tourneau, and H. Saladin, *Les monuments chrétiens de Thessalonique* (Paris, 1918), 219–20.

¹³⁴ J.-P. Sodini, "L'ambon de la Rotonde Saint-Georges: Remarques sur la typologie et le décor," *BCH* 100 (1976), 500–502 n. 37.

¹³⁵ Orlandos, *Βασιλική*, II, 545–49.

¹³⁶ Kambouri-Vamvoukou, "Ἀρχιτεκτονικὰ γλυπτὰ," 229–31.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 225–40.

¹³⁹ Kondakov, *Makedonija*, 122–23. Kondakov states that the carvings were reemployed on the surrounding wall, on the west facade, on part of the east side, and on the portico of the yard (by which he probably means the arcaded portico).

¹⁴⁰ Vasdravellis, "Βομβαρδισμός," 424: Τὸ κτήριον τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἦτον ἀριστοῦργημα διότι ἐπωνομάζετο Κιβωτὸς ὅλα τὰ τοίχη τῆς ἦτον κεκοσμημένα ἀπὸ ζῶα γεγλυμμένα καὶ ἀνάγλυφα κατὰ ζεύγος . . .

¹⁴¹ A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople (IVe–Xe siècle)* (Paris, 1963), 73; and Kambouri-Vamvoukou, "Ἀρχιτεκτονικὰ γλυπτὰ," 225–40.

A number of questions now arise. Since their transportation from another site can not be excluded, do the early Christian capitals, the carvings, and the ambo belong to the same monument, and can this monument be identified with the church on the site of the present Aghios Menas? If the answer is affirmative, then the date of these architectural members indicates the construction date of the monument. Combining this with the type of the apse we can reach some conclusion about its architectural type: it should have been a basilica. (We should bear in mind that it was a long monument, according to the TMA documents, and was situated at the east end of a long block.) The large size of the apse is indicative of the early Christian building's size. Another question is whether the monument was originally dedicated to St. Menas "the Egyptian,"¹⁴² whose legend had spread to Byzantium by the sixth century, or was the church of the Virgin mentioned in the account of the miracles of St. Demetrios? Or was it both, perhaps?

It is time now to reconsider this problem in relation to the location of the early Christian monument in the urban setting. The monument was located in the oldest part of Thessaloniki. As Michael Vickers has noticed,¹⁴³ in the southern part of the city the streets are laid parallel to the line of the seashore, an alignment diverging noticeably from that of the northern streets. The surviving lower part of the apse provides the longitudinal axis of the early Christian building, which is parallel to the southern streets. Thus not only the present monument, but also the early Christian one was laid parallel to these streets and concurrently to the seashore, in contrast to the churches of Aghios Demetrios, Panaghia Acheiropoietos, and even the Rotunda (Christian phase), which took up the alignment of the Hellenistic grid.

According to a new theory, maintained by Elli Georgila and based on recently found archaeological evidence,¹⁴⁴ in the Roman and the early Christian period a small port existed to the south of the present Aghios Menas, adjacent to the port of Constantine. This port probably was the "ἐκκλησιαστικὴ σκάλα," a term attested by the account of the Miracles,¹⁴⁵ and probably meaning the "ecclesiastic port." A narrow, unwalled peninsula existed between the two ports. At the edge of this peninsula (perhaps on the site of the later Tophâne), a tower, also mentioned by the same text, rose, which controlled the entrance to the Roman port. Following the erection of the medieval sea walls shortly after 620 or possibly after 630, the port was included within them and filled with earth.

Theoharides was the first to remark that the ἐκκλησιαστικὴ σκάλα, which he presumed to be a gate, should be located close to the "ancient" church of Aghios Menas.¹⁴⁶ Vickers asserted that the term referred to the harbor as a whole or to a landing stage in

¹⁴²A. Kazhdan, "The Noble Origin of Saint Menas," *Byzantina* 13.1 (1985), 667–71; R. Hoddinot, *Early Christian Churches in Makedonia and Southern Serbia* (London, 1963), 144; S. Pelekanides, *Τὰ παλαιοχριστιανικὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης* (Thessaloniki, 1973), 48–55.

¹⁴³M. Vickers, "Towards Reconstruction of the Town-Planning of Roman Thessaloniki," *Ancient Macedonia* (Thessaloniki, 1970), 240–43. It should be noted that Vickers derived his conclusions from the map of Thessaloniki after the 1890 fire. Wernieski's map, drawn before the fire, corroborates his theory.

¹⁴⁴E. Georgila, "Το κτίριο τῆς Εθνικῆς Τράπεζας στὴν πλατεία Ελευθερίας τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης. Οἱ εκπλήξεις τῆς θεμελίωσης καὶ τὸ χρονικὸ τῆς ἀνέγερσης, 1928–1933," in *Το κτίριο τῆς Εθνικῆς Τράπεζας τῆς Ελλάδος στὴν πλατεία Ελευθερίας τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης* (Thessaloniki, 1995), 41–44.

¹⁴⁵Lemerle, *Miracles* (as above, note 101), 177, lines 18–19: "οἱ μὲν εἰς τὸν πρὸς τὴν δύσιν τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς σκάλας πύργον, ἔνθα καὶ παραπύλιον ὑπάρχει, . . ."

¹⁴⁶Theoharides, *Τοπογραφία* (as above, note 109), 13 and plan insert.

it, and related it to the church of the Virgin. He then investigated the case of the identification of Aghios Menas with this church of the Virgin,¹⁴⁷ but rejected it, because he had limited information about the dating of the early Christian monument on the site of Aghios Menas. He based his opinion on Tafrali, who erroneously had dated the original church of Aghios Menas to the eighth or the ninth century.¹⁴⁸ In my view, Georgila's theory¹⁴⁹ helps solve the problem. If indeed the small port had been the ecclesiastic port, then all the examined evidence converges to one assertion: the early Christian monument on the site of the present Aghios Menas should have been the exulted temple of the Virgin, the church to which the port owed its name. The date when the church of the Virgin was dedicated to Aghios Menas remains obscure. The alignment of the church parallel to the seashore indicates that it was located on the site of an even earlier Roman or Hellenistic monument. I can only imagine what this monument could have been. Excavational research at this area would probably lead to interesting findings.

In conclusion, I must underline the close relationship between Aghios Menas and the other major churches in Thessaloniki in terms of typology (the apse), sculptural decoration (the ambo and the capitals), and financial status (as recorded in Paris, B.N. cod. 2953). Its significance for the city is revealed by the fact that it gave its name to a district, as did the churches of Acheiropoietos, Aghios Demetrios, and Rotunda (Aghioi Asomatoi). The splendor of this church is attested by the account of the Miracles of St. Demetrios, has survived in the oral tradition and in the accounts of the city's visitors, and is corroborated by the surviving architectural members. Aghios Menas, located on the way from the harbor to the market, just inside the main harbor gate of the Byzantine sea walls, has always been the church of the guilds, the seamen, and the merchants, a tradition that is still reflected in its customs.¹⁵⁰ The excavated temples of the Egyptian gods (probably Serapis and Isis),¹⁵¹ the Micir Carci (Egyptian market)¹⁵² of the Turkish period, the metochion of the Sinai monastery, and the still existing Egypt Street, all located in the same district around the church of Aghios Menas "the Egyptian," reveal uninterrupted commercial and cultural exchanges between Egypt and Thessaloniki from the Hellenistic period until today. To accommodate the needs of the once multinational inhabitants of its district, the church also absorbed the cults of two more "foreign" saints, Victor "the Italian" and Vikentios "the Spaniard."¹⁵³

The present study does not claim to have provided an answer to every unanswered

¹⁴⁷Vickers, "Sea Walls" (as above, note 81), 270. Spieser, *Thessalonique*, 33–34.

¹⁴⁸Tafrali, *Topographie* (as above, note 2), 177.

¹⁴⁹Spieser, *Thessalonique*, 33–34, has also investigated the problem thoroughly, but he did not arrive at any conclusion. See also, J.-M. Spieser, "Note sur le rempart maritime de Thessalonique," *TM* 8 (1981), 477.

¹⁵⁰For example, the Good Friday service takes place early in the afternoon for the convenience of the local shopkeepers and merchants.

¹⁵¹Ch. Makaronas, 'Ανασκαφαὶ καὶ ἔρευναι ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ κατὰ τὸ ἔτος 1939," *Makedonika* 1 (1940), 464–65.

¹⁵²Micir Carci was one of the most important marketplaces in Thessaloniki, comprising five hundred sale rooms and accommodating three hundred merchants, according to the itinerary of the Turkish traveler Evliya Celebi. N. Moschopoulos, "Ἡ Ἑλλάς κατὰ τὸν Εἰβλὶὰ Τσελεμπή," *Ἐπ. Ἐτ. Βυζ. Σπ.* 16 (1940), 336–37, 351.

¹⁵³The existence of the relics of Saints Victor and Vincent in the church of Aghios Menas in Constantinople in the twelfth century is reported. R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, pt. 1, vol. III: *Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1969), 334–35.

question connected with such an interesting but perplexing monument as Aghios Menas. By furnishing and examining new historical data in comparison with archaeological evidence, it has attempted to resolve some problems—and created new ones in the process. As the history of Aghios Menas is closely bound to the history of Thessaloniki, the investigations will be continued.

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